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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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CENTRE BINS CHANDIGARH BILL AFTER BACKLASH

The Bill aimed to give Prez power over the UT

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Union Home Ministry Sunday said that it has no intention to bring the proposed Bill on Chandigarh in the upcoming Winter session of Parliament and asserted that the proposal doesn't aim to change traditional arrangements between Chandigarh and Punjab and Haryana.

This comes a day after a bulletin of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha listed the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill 2025 among the provisional list of 10 bills for the upcoming session beginning 1 December.

The Bill that proposes to bring Chandigarh under the ambit of Article 240 of the Constitution, which empowers the President to make regulations for the UT and legislate directly, sparked sharp reactions from leaders in Punjab.

"A suitable decision will be taken only after adequate consultations with all stakeholders, keeping in mind the interests of Chandigarh. There is no need for any concern on this matter. The Central government has no intention of introducing any Bill to this effect in the upcoming Winter session of Parliament," the ministry said in a statement.

"The proposal only to simplify the central government's law-making process for the Union territory of Chandigarh is still under consideration with the Central government. No final decision has been taken on this proposal," a spokesperson of the ministry said.

The ministry said the proposal in no way seeks to alter Chandigarh's governance or administrative structure, nor does it aim to change "traditional arrangements between Chandigarh and the states of Punjab or Haryana".

AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann **PHOTO: PTI**

Chandigarh is the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

Earlier, Punjab's BJP chief Sunil Jakhar on Sunday said he would meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah and request him to withdraw the bill.

"The sentiments of Punjab cannot be ignored. Chandigarh is just not a geographical piece. Sentiments of Punjab are attached to it. There should be no ambiguity about it," said Jakhar.

The ruling AAP in Punjab has also created a storm about the bill, while the Congress said the Centre should "first think, then act." —*PTI*

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Justice Kant to take oath as next CJI today

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Justice Surya Kant will take his oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India on Monday, succeeding Justice BR Gavai. Appointed to the role on 30 October, Justice Kant is set to serve for approximately 15 months, concluding his tenure on 9 February 2027, upon reaching the age of 65. Justice Kant has played a pivotal role in several landmark rulings, including those concerning the abrogation of Article 370, electoral reforms in Bihar, and matters regarding surveillance, notably the Pegasus spyware case. Other decisions are withholding the colonial-era sedition law, and affirming the One Rank-One Pension scheme for defence personnel. —*PTI*

2 months after stampede, Vijay starts campaigns

CHENNAI, 23 NOV

Actor-politician Vijay, founder of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), resumed his political campaign on Sunday with an address to supporters in Kanchipuram district. This marks his first public appearance in almost two months. Held at a private educational institution in Sunguvarchattiram, the event accommodated approximately 1,500 attendees, all of whom must present QR-coded passes for entry. Party workers, donned in bright yellow T-shirts and caps, have undergone crowd management training with retired police officials. Security measures include bouncers from private agencies and tin-sheets. —*PTI*

'Breastmilk is contaminated with uranium in Bihar'

PATNA, 23 NOV

Breastmilk samples of 40 mothers from Bihar were found to be "highly contaminated" with uranium, a study published in the 'Nature' journal says. It, however, noted that contamination had only the "minor impact on the mothers and infants." Forty mothers, aged between 17 and 35 years, took part in the study. The study was conducted in the Bhojpur, Samastipur, Begusarai, Khagaria, Katihar and Nalanda districts of Bihar between October 2021 and July 2024. It revealed that "all the samples had uranium." The highest uranium concentration in breastmilk was observed in Katihar district at 5.25 Qg/L. —*Agencies*

ITBP to set up 10 all-women border outposts on LAC

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, 23 NOV

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), responsible for guarding the 3,488 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, is set to establish 10 all-women border posts along this challenging and icy frontier, announced paramilitary's Director General, Praveen Kumar, during the force's 64th Raising Day parade in Jammu on Saturday. As part of its ambitious "forwardisation" plan, initiated after the 2020 military clash in Ladakh, the ITBP has already moved 215 border outposts forward along India's northern and eastern flanks, an increase from 180. The ITBP aims to establish 41 more forward bases along the LAC in the near future. —*PTI*

TIME'S A-TICKING

DyCM DK Shivakumar, AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: SALAR/X**

High Command will decide on K'taka CM change: Cong Prez

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

As speculation around Chief Minister change in Karnataka refuses to die down, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said that the party High Command will decide on the isuse, and he has nothing to say now.

"Whatever it is, the High Command will do it. There is no need for you (media) to worry more about it," Kharge told reporters outside his residence in the City.

The AICC Chief stated this a day after his meeting with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the City. He was also scheduled to meet Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday.

The power tussle within the ruling party has intensified after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on 20 November.

Both Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah have said they would abide by the High Command's decision.

The CM's meeting with the AICC Chief came after some MLAs supporting Shivakumar travelled to New Delhi to meet Kharge.

On Sunday, Ministers HC Mahadevappa and K Venkatesh, considered close to Siddaramaiah, met Kharge at his residence. Mahadevappa said the meeting discussed organising the party to prepare it for the upcoming local body polls. He asserted that Siddaramaiah would complete his full term. —*PTI*

I am in the CM race too, says Parameshwara

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday hinted that he too was in the race to become the Chief Minister, in case there was a leadership change in the State. His remarks come amid demands for a "Dalit CM".

Trying to downplay reports about confusion within the party on the issue of Chief Minister change, he pointed out that no one from the Congress High Command has spoken on the matter so far, nor has it been discussed in the Congress Legislature Party.

"I'm always in the race," he said. Asked if he will ask the High Command to consider him in case there is a leadership change, Parameshwara said, "Let that situation come, such a situation has not come."

He noted that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is abroad. Party President Mallikarjun Kharge will discuss with him upon his return, he said. —*PTI*

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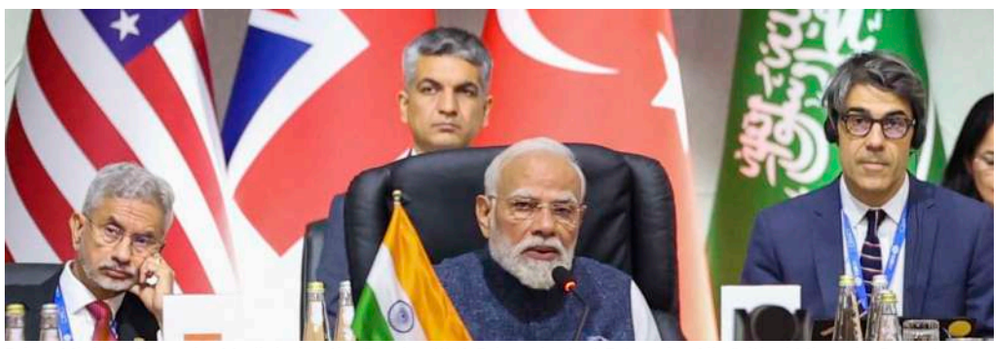

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Session III 'A Fair and a Just Future for All- Critical Minerals; Decent Work; Artificial Intelligence', of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa **PHOTO: PTI**

G20: PM calls for global governance of AI

JOHANNESBURG, 23 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for a global compact to prevent misuse of artificial intelligence and made a strong pitch for critical technologies to be human-centric, instead of finance-centric.

Addressing the third session of the G20 summit here, Modi also said technology applications should be "global" rather than "national", and based on "open source" rather than "exclusive models".

- Modi said, "We must all ensure that AI is used for global good and its misuse is prevented. To do this, we must create a global compact on AI based on certain core principles."

"We must all ensure that AI is used for global good and its misuse is prevented. To do this, we must create a global compact on AI based on certain core principles, including effective human oversight, safety-by-design, transparency, and strict restrictions on the use of AI in deepfakes, crime, and terror activities," Modi said, addressing the third session of the G20 Summit.

Meanwhile, during the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) leaders summit Modi also said that reforms to the United Nations Security Council were now a necessity. —*PTI*

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Lakshya Sen wins Australian Open Super 500

SYDNEY, 23 NOV

Lakshya Sen ended a difficult stretch on the international circuit by clinching his first title of the season, defeating Japan's Yushi Tanaka in the men's singles final of the USD 4,75,000 Australian Open Super 500 here on Sunday.

The 24-year-old from Almora, who had endured a tough phase after finishing fourth at the Paris Olympics, defeated the 26-year-old Tanaka 21-15, 21-11 in 38 minutes and celebrated the win by putting his fingers in his ears.

Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze-medallist, had last won a Super 300 title at the Syed Modi International in Lucknow in 2024. However, a top-tier crown had eluded him since his triumph at the Canada Open in 2024.

Facing world No 26 Tanaka, winner of two Super 300 titles this year at the Orléans Masters and the US Open,

Lakshya displayed crisp control, sharp placement and clean execution.

With this victory, the reigning Commonwealth Games champion became the second Indian to win a BWF World Tour title this season, after Ayush Shetty's maiden Super 300 triumph at the US Open. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

Eight arrested for abducting B'luru BPO employees

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Police have rescued four managerial employees from a Bengaluru-based BPO firm, who were reportedly abducted by a gang of eight posing as police officers. The suspects, which include a police constable, allegedly extorted Rs 8.90 lakh from the operations manager while demanding additional funds.

The incident unfolded around midnight on Friday, with the victims held hostage in Malur, Kolar district. DCP (South-East) Sarah Fathima stated, "On Friday at 1 am, eight people posing as police took four manager-level employees working at a BPO in Koramangala under the pretext of an inquiry and kidnapped them." She confirmed that the fictitious officers forced the operations manager to transfer the extorted money online and demanded further cash.

After receiving a complaint via the emergency helpline at 4.30am on Saturday, police swiftly formed four teams to pursue the case. Home Minister G Parameshwara announced that the arrested police constable is stationed at Malur town police station and emphasised the need for departmental vigilance. "Instructions will be given to take merciless action against police involved." —*PTI*

Auto driver self-immolates during police check

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

An auto driver set himself ablaze after being stopped during a drink-and-drive check in Karnataka's Chitradurga district on the night of 22 November.

The incident took place at the Mahatma Gandhi circle when the police reportedly seized the driver, Thippeswamy's auto during the inspection. When officers asked him to undergo the breath analysis test, he allegedly refused and began arguing. Moments later, he attempted to set himself on fire.

He sustained 70 per cent burn injuries and his condition is critical.

A video that has gone viral. While, Thippeswamy can be heard admitting he had consumed alcohol, he also accused the police of harassing him. —*Agencies*

An auto driver sets himself ablaze in Chitradurga

NIGHTMARE ON B'LURU STREET

Techie duped of ₹48 L in sexual health scam

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

The southwest division of Bengaluru police has registered an FIR against an alleged Ayurvedic guru and the owner of Vijayalaxmi Ayurvedic Shop following a complaint from a local software engineer who claims to have been defrauded of nearly Rs 48 lakh.

The victim reported suffering kidney damage due to purported herbal treatments.

The complaint, lodged on 22 November, names two accused

- The quack allegedly prescribed exorbitant medicines, including Devaraj Booti priced at Rs 1.6 lakh per gram and Bhavan Booti Taila at Rs 76,000 per gram. The victim has suffered kidney problems

individuals: Vijay Guruji and the shop owner. According to the FIR, the victim was lured on 3 May 2025, by a roadside Ayurvedic tent that promised quick relief for sexual issues.

The accused allegedly prescribed exorbitant medicines, including Devaraj Booti priced at Rs 1.6 lakh per gram and Bhavan Booti Taila at Rs 76,000 per gram, coercing the victim into repeated purchases under threats of life-threatening consequences if treatment failed.

The FIR has been filed under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 and police are on the hunt for the accused. —*ANI*

BIHAR POLLS WERE RIGGED BUT HAVE NO PROOF, SAYS PRASHANT KISHOR

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Prashant Kishor, the founder of the Jan Suraaj Party, broke his silence following a disheartening performance in the Bihar Assembly elections, where his party failed to secure any seats. Kishor claimed the elections were "rigged," although he admitted he has "no proof" to substantiate this assertion. He described the defeat as "crushing," insisting his campaign had garnered significant ground support.

"Voting trends did not match the feedback," Kishor stated.

"There were some invisible powers at play," he added.

Kishor further accused the NDA of influencing voters by distributing money, alleging that "women were handed ten thousand rupees." Despite the setbacks, he dismissed claims that his political career is over, asserting, "Abhi kahani baki hai [the story is far from over]." —*Agencies*

No meat sale in City on 25 Nov for Vaswani Jayanti

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

The Greater Bengaluru Authority has said that animal slaughterhouses and the sale of meat across the Greater Bengaluru area will be completely prohibited on Tuesday, 25 November for the occasion of Sadhu Vaswani Jayanthi. The day is often known as 'International Meatless Day' owing to the Mira Movement founder's beliefs and practices. —*Salar News*

MP Yaduveer flags off kids' cyclothon in Mysuru

MYSURU, 23 NOV

Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar on Sunday said both the Union and State governments are giving top priority to promoting sports through various initiatives, including the Fit India campaign. He was speaking after flagging off a kids' cyclothon organised by the University of Mysore's Department of Physical Education, the Mysuru District Amateur Cycling Association, Sunpure and other organisations at the Manasagangothri campus. Yaduveer said the Fit India campaign aims to encourage citizens to include at least 30 minutes of physical activity in their daily routine to build a healthier nation. Since its launch in 2019, events such as the Fit India Plog Run, Fit India School and Fit India Cyclothon have drawn strong public participation. He added that the government continues to encourage children to take up sports. —*Salar News*

Student's body found in a well in Mandya

MANDYA, 23 NOV

An engineering college student's body was discovered in an open well in Doddasomanahalli village, KR Pete taluk, Mandya district of the State, on Sunday. The deceased, identified as Karan, 22, hailed from Halesiddarahalli in Kadur taluk, Chikkamagaluru district, and was a student at an engineering college in Shravanabelagola, Hassan district. The police officials stated, "The incident took place in a suspicious condition," with both a motorcycle and a mobile phone located near the open well at the scene. Firefighters conducted a recovery operation to retrieve the body, which has since been sent for post-mortem examination. A case has been registered, and the investigation is ongoing. —*ANI*

I have always been in the CM race: Parameshwara

Says he led Cong to power in 2013; Jarkiholi bats for Dr G

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday said that he has always been in the race to become Chief Minister, amid rumours of a power struggle within the ruling Congress.

There have been speculation about Chief Minister change in the State, after the Congress government reaches the halfway mark of its five-year term in November, citing alleged "power-sharing" agreement involving CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar.

"I'm always in the race, it is not a big issue. I was the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President in 2013. We brought the Congress government to power (in 2013 Assembly polls). I never claimed credit for it solely. I lost in that poll. Had I won, what would have happened, I don't know," Parameshwara said.

Speaking to press in the City, he said, "I was in the race then, naturally, as there is a convention in the Congress party where the KPCC President is often given a chance (to become CM), but it is not followed in some situations..."

When questioned if there was a demand for a "Dalit CM", citing repeated meetings of AHINDA ministers such as HC Mahadevappa, Satish Jarkiholi and others, Parameshwara replied, "there has been demand for a Dalit to become CM for long."

"Will it happen, just because we meet?" he asked.

He reiterated that Siddaramaiah was chosen as the Chief Minister at the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting after the 2023 Assembly polls, in the presence of AICC observers, and nothing was said about a 2.5 year term for him then.

"If CM has to be changed in between, it is left to the High Command. We cannot do it... It was done in the past, Veerappa Moily replaced S Bangarappa as chief minister," he said. However, he doesn't feel such a situation has come.

Meanwhile, Jarkiholi in Belagavi said there is nothing wrong in Parameshwara's statements.

"Main voters for this party are SC/ST and minorities and there is a desire that they should get prominence," he said, adding that Parameshwara was KPCC chief for eight years, and had worked for the party to come to power (in 2013).

Many workers and legislators contributed to the party's success and coming to power in the State. "I don't accept claims by some people that the party came to power because of a select few," he said in an apparent reference to Shivakumar. —*PTI*

RS 50-CRORE OFFER

BJP leader claims Congress factions trading MLAs

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Alleging 'horse-trading' between factions within the ruling Congress, BJP leader Chalavadi Narayanaswamy on Sunday claimed that Rs 50 crore, a flat and a car were being offered to MLAs to win them over.

Accusing AICC General Secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala, of "doing business" by allegedly seeking Rs 200 crore from ministerial aspirants, Narayanaswamy demanded a probe and said he planned to write to the Enforcement Directorate.

"More than infighting, trading is happening in Congress," Narayanaswamy told press in the City. "At first, we heard Rs 50 crore was being offered to each MLA. Now the bargaining has increase, some are demanding Rs 75 crore, others up to Rs 100 crore. But the offer of Rs 50 crore plus a flat and a Fortuner car is what I have been told." He said that horse-trading was earlier heard of between rival parties but is now occurring within the Congress itself.

"There are multiple factions in Congress, but the big two are led by the CM and the Deputy CM. I have heard that both sides have begun trying to buy MLAs from each other," he said. The LoP in the Legislative Council claimed that MLA KC Veerendra 'Puppy', who was arrested in an ED case recently, had apparently paid an advance. "Surjewala should be arrested. He is doing business for ministerial posts," he claimed.

Hitting out at Dalit leaders in the Congress, Narayanaswamy claimed they "lack the guts" and only make statements. "If you (Congress Dalit leaders) have the guts, take the CM post. Don't mislead people with mere statements. Congress is like slow poison for Dalits. It has done injustice to Ambedkar," he claimed. —*PTI*

Joshi says govt finally taking action on maize

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

- Posting a government notification on X which reminded distilleries of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in purchasing maize at Minimum Support Prices (MSP) through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has finally awoken and directed distilleries to purchase maize for ethanol production.

Posting a government notification on X which reminded distilleries of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in purchasing maize at Minimum Support Prices (MSP) through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India/ National Cooperative Consumers Federation of India (NCCF/NAFED), Joshi said "Finally, Kumbhakarna (Chief Minister Siddaramaiah) has woken up from his slumber."

In response to Siddaramaiah's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said: "I told the media, the State government has failed to follow the SOP clearly issued by the Central government."

The government has signed an agreement with the NCCF and NAFED topurchase maize for ethanol production, he said.

"Siddaramaiah should stop pointing fingers at the Central government to create confusion among the farmers of the State and hide his failed administration," he added.

The letter from the Department of Agricultural Marketing requested all grain-based distilleries in the State to: Place firm Purchase Orders (POs) with either NAFED or NCCF; Release the mandatory 10 per cent advance to the respective agency as per the SOP. Confirm their total maize requirement to enable systematic procurement and planning of supply (by 24 November). —*Salar News*

Sindh may return to India: Rajnath recalls Advani

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday recalled BJP veteran LK Advani's reflections on Sindh's civilisational ties with India, saying "borders can change" and "tomorrow Sindh may return to India".

Addressing a Sindhi community event here, Singh quoted Advani as saying Sindhi Hindus of his generation had never fully accepted the Partition-driven separation of Sindh.

He noted that while Sindh has been part of Pakistan since 1947, its people have long considered the Indus River sacred, a sentiment shared by many Muslims there. Singh said Sindh remains integral to India's civilisational identity regardless of political boundaries. He added that the Indus largely went to Pakistan after Partition but "the importance of Sindhu, Sindh and Sindhi has not diminished." —*PTI*

RS 6.29 CR SEIZED SO FAR

B'luru cash-van robbery: Police make seventh arrest

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Police on Sunday said they have arrested a seventh suspect in the Rs 7.11 crore cash van robbery reported on 19 November. The accused, detained late Saturday, is related to one of the six suspects already arrested. Police have so far recovered Rs 6.29 crore of the stolen amount.

Among those arrested earlier were former employees of CMS Info Systems, the cash logistics firm involved, and Constable Annappa Naik of Govindapura station. Officials said multiple teams were deployed to trace the suspects, two of whom allegedly used insider knowledge of cash movements.

Confirming the latest arrest, Home Minister G Parameshwara said efforts were on to track the remaining. "The robbers have been caught and seven people arrested. Some more individuals are yet to be apprehended. One person from the police department is also involved," he told reporters.

Parameshwara commended the joint effort of two joint commissioners, two DCPs and over 200 personnel who worked "with technical precision and utmost caution". The incident, he said, had brought "a bad name" to the city and posed a significant challenge to the police. He added that the vehicles used in the crime had been seized and instructed the department to take strict action against any police personnel involved. On whether CMS Info Systems failed to follow RBI norms, the minister said compliance was being examined. —*PTI*

JD(S) hits back after DKS snaps at reporter

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

The JD(S) hit back at Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who had earlier threatened to file a defamation case against HD Kumaraswamy when a reporter said the Union Minister claimed that the Bengaluru Minister wanted to meet Home Minister Amit Shah because of an internal struggle within the Congress.

Shivakumar however later found out that the Kumaraswamy never made the statement and issued cautioned the press against making false statements to provoke responses.

However, the JD(S) X handle slammed Shivakumar, saying "You're the fool who gives idiotic answers to questions from the media."

"Looking at your words, your choice of language, one can gauge what level your mental health is at. This is one reason why the people of Karnataka are afraid of you," the post read. "Did Kumaraswamy even make that statement about you? Prove it.... When you're done talking, there's another shloka to recite: "A tongue without propriety, abandon your lowly wit, oh tongue"; first, read and understand these simple words spoken by the poet."

Shivakumar's team had requested media houses not to air the objectionable portion from the press conference and said, "The Dy CM expressed deep dissatisfaction over the media giving such wrong information and receiving such a response when asking questions.

One should not create false information and ask false questions." —*Salar News*

Three held for assault, death threats in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

Three men have been arrested here for allegedly assaulting a motorcyclist and threatening to kill him near the Ayyappa Temple in Shantinagar on 15 November, police said on Sunday. Wilson Garden police made the arrests and recovered two firearms, two mobile phones, a silver chain and a stolen two-wheeler from the suspects.

DCP (Central) Akshay M Hakay said the complainant was intercepted around 5am by three attackers who assaulted him with a weapon, issued death threats and fled with his belongings. A case was filed, and investigators traced and detained the trio after sustained questioning.

Police said the accused had earlier stolen a two-wheeler and used it to intimidate people by brandishing firearms. They allegedly robbed mobile phones and jewellery from multiple victims.

The operation was supervised by Central Division DCP Akshay M Hakay and Halasurugate Sub-Division Acting Commissioner of Police Sudeer S, with Wilson Garden Police Inspector Farooq Pasha and his team executing the arrests.

Police said the probe continues to identify accomplices and link the suspects to other offences. —*ANI*

MESSAGE OF LOVE

'One World One Family' mega fest culminates

BENGALURU, 23 NOV

The unique 'One World One Family' Orchestra, the Symphony of Unity, featuring more than 450 globally acclaimed musicians from over 60 countries, along with a 70-member choir and 200 young students of the Sai Symphony Orchestra, performed a range of musical pieces for over three hours in a packed stadium.

The event marked the culmination of the 100-day mega cultural festival, which drew unprecedented participation and enthusiasm from devotees and visitors.

The festival, held to coincide with the centenary birth anniversary of Sathya Sai Baba, began on 16 August and concluded on Sunday.

Over its 100-day span, it hosted religious leaders, artists, political figures, corporate heads and humanitarians, all paying tribute to Sri Sathya Sai Baba's legacy of service and unity.

The event marked the culmination of the mega cultural festival organised in honour of Sathya Sai Baba **PHOTO: SALAR**

A series of major healthcare initiatives were launched, including a free hospital, free cardiac surgeries and 126 Sai Swasthya Wellness Centres aimed at strengthening grassroots healthcare.

Stalwarts from numerous fields across various countries were honoured for their contributions, while artists from more than 100 nations showcased their cultural heritage.

Religious preachers also delivered messages promoting harmony and societal well-being.

President of Fiji, Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, speaking at the valedictory function, said Love and Peace were the need of the hour.

He praised the Sai Sathya Sai Foundation for spreading these values across the globe in just thirteen years.

Sadguru Sai Madhusudhan said the foundation remained committed to carrying forward Sathya Sai Baba's message of Peace and Love, with a strong focus on improving health and education across the globe.

He added that the foundation would undertake more such initiatives in the coming years. —*Salar News*

Bangladesh sends India fresh plea to extradite Hasina

DHAKA, 23 NOV

Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus has sent an official letter to New Delhi seeking the extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina after the International Crimes Tribunal sentenced her to death.

Foreign affairs adviser Touhid Hossain confirmed the letter was dispatched on Friday. Hasina, 78, and ex–home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal were handed capital punishment in absentia, while former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun received five years as an approver.

Hasina's government fell during the 5 August 'July Uprising', in which a UN rights report said about 1,400 people were killed across Bangladesh. India acknowledged an earlier diplomatic note but has made no commitment on extradition, saying it remains engaged with all political stakeholders for regional stability. —*PTI*

Govt to promote 'Sanatan Dharma' in Bihar districts

PATNA, 23 NOV

A Bihar government council, responsible for supervising activities of registered temples and mutts, has decided to nominate convenors in all districts to work for the promotion of 'Sanatan Dharma' in state. 38 conveners will be nominated by the Bihar State Religious Trust Council to work in coordination with the chief priests of 2,499 registered temples and mutts in their respective areas. The process to select one convener in each district will begin in a day or two, and the "convenors will be selected from among chief priests only. It will maintains records of assets of registered temples, mutts and trusts and also supervises their activities. They will ensure that all registered religious places create dedicated space for "akharas" to practise physical culture. *—PTI*

Odisha BJD alleges EVM fraud, seeks EC's action

BHUBANESHWAR, 23 NOV

The opposition BJD on Saturday said it will file a complaint with the Election Commission alleging large-scale "state-sponsored manipulation" in the Nuapada bypoll. The decision was taken at a meeting of the party's political affairs committee chaired by Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik. Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik said an earlier complaint to the Chief Electoral Officer yielded no response. Mallik alleged that BJD votes were "diverted" through EVM manipulation using "official machinery and money power", claiming irregularities in 63 booths. She said the party will conduct its own inquiry to "expose" the alleged tampering. The bypoll on 11 November saw 83.45 per cent turnout. BJP's Jay Dholakia won by 83,748 votes. *—PTI*

Chh'garh DyCM visits rehabilitated naxalites

SUKMA, 23 NOV

Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma paid a surprise visit to a rehabilitation centre in Sukma on Saturday to meet 94 surrendered Naxalites. Sharma, who also holds the Home portfolio, held a 'choupal' with the youth, heard their concerns and reviewed food, accommodation and training facilities. He directed officials to organise a health camp, complete pending documentation and allow family visits. Sharma also asked the administration to facilitate community weddings for those wishing to marry and to arrange the youths' visit to the state assembly during the winter session to familiarise them with democratic processes. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Akhilesh's SIR claims: Maurya predicts setbacks

LUCKNOW, 23 NOV

Following allegations by Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav that the BJP government and the Election Commission are conspiring to remove voters from select constituencies, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya has suggested that significant electoral setbacks for the opposition will soon occur in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. On X, Maurya remarked, "During the Bihar elections, with Rahul Gandhi diving in and dragging Tejashwi Yadav along, the fate of the Mahagathbandhan was sealed." He added, "The next number is that of Mamata Didi and then SP's brave Akhilesh Yadav." Akhilesh had claimed that over 50,000 votes were in danger of deletion and expressed hopes for the Election Commission's impartiality in addressing his concerns. *—PTI*

UNSC reforms a necessity: Modi says in South Africa

PM says IBSA should be institutionalised, meets dozens of leaders

JOHANNESBURG, 23 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the reform of the UN Security Council was no longer an option, but a necessity and asserted that the India-Brazil-South Africa troika should send a clear message for changes to institutions of global governance.

Addressing the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) leaders summit here, Modi said that at a time when the world appears fragmented and divided, IBSA can provide a message of unity, cooperation, and humanity.

He also proposed institutionalising the IBSA NSA-level meeting to strengthen security cooperation among the three countries.

"In the fight against terrorism, we must move forward in close coordination. There is no place for any double standards on such a serious issue," Modi said at the meeting attended by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Highlighting technology's crucial role in ensuring human-centric development, the Prime Minister also proposed establishing an 'IBSA Digital Innovation Alliance' to facilitate the sharing of Digital Public Infrastructure like UPI, health platforms like CoWIN, cybersecurity frameworks and women-led tech initiatives among the three countries.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Leaders' Summit, in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

- In his separate discussions with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on the sidelines of the event, they agreed to discuss ways to strengthen trade.

Modi also invited IBSA leaders to the AI Impact Summit to be held in India next year.

Modi met dozens of world leaders at the G20, including Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, where they agreed to unlock the potential for deeper cooperation in defence and space sectors, besides advancing ties in areas such as trade, investment, technology and energy.

In his separate discussions with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on the sidelines of the event, they agreed to discuss ways to strengthen trade.

Meanwhile, in his closing address at the G20, Ramaphosa said India, Brazil and Indonesia had laid the foundation for the G20 Leaders' Summit that ended on Sunday afternoon following two days of deliberations.

G20 leaders committed to engaging constructively to address concerns regarding global minimum tax and tax challenges arising from digitalisation of the economy, while preserving the tax sovereignty of all countries. *—ANI*

BILL ON CHANDIGARH

First announce, second think: Cong mocks Modi govt

NEW DELHI/ CHANDIGARH, 23 NOV

With the Union Home Ministry stating that it has no intention to bring the proposed bill on Chandigarh in Parliament's Winter session, the Congress on Sunday took a swipe at the Modi government, claiming it is yet another example of its "first announce, second think" approach to governance.

Congress General Secretary in-charge (Communications) **Jairam Ramesh** said that just yesterday, the Parliament Bulletin for the forthcoming Winter Session had listed for introduction a Constitution Amendment Bill to enable the appointment of a full-time LG for Chandigarh.

This was immediately and aggressively opposed by the Congress and other parties in Punjab whose Governor is also the Administrator of Chandigarh, Ramesh said on X.

The Union Home Ministry now says that it has no intention to introduce the Bill in the Winter Session, he said.

Meanwhile, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal vehemently opposed the Centre's proposed move, calling it a "direct attack" on Punjab's identity and constitutional rights.

"The BJP-led central government's attempt to eliminate Punjab's rights over Chandigarh through constitutional amendment is not part of a simple move, but a direct attack on Punjab's identity and constitutional rights. This mentality of undermining the federal structure and depriving Punjabis of their rights is extremely dangerous," Kejriwal said in a post on X.

Additionally, with his party facing flak over the Centre proposing a law to appoint an independent administrator in Chandigarh, Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar on Sunday said Chandigarh is an integral part of Punjab, assuring that the "confusion" regarding the Union territory will be resolved. *—PTI*

Cong says SIR reminiscent of demonetisation & lockdown

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Congress on Sunday accused the BJP of overburdening Booth Level Officers (BLOs) during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the resulting stress has led to multiple deaths. Citing a media report claiming 16 BLO deaths in 19 days, Congress President **Mallikarjun Kharge** said the BJP's "vote chori" had taken a "deadly turn".

He alleged that excessive workload was pushing BLOs and polling officers to suicide and compared the "hasty, unplanned" rollout of SIR to the abrupt implementation of demonetisation and the COVID-19 lockdown.

"My deepest condolences to every family who has lost a loved one. Based on ground reality, this number is far higher than reported," Kharge said, questioning who would ensure justice for affected families.

Kharge further accused the Election Commission of remaining a "mute spectator" while institutions were being pressured by the BJP's "hunger for power". He warned that silence over SIR and alleged "vote theft" would weaken democratic pillars.

In West Bengal's Nadia district, a woman BLO was found hanging at her home on Saturday, with family members claiming she was under intense SIR-related stress. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee termed the death "truly alarming" and shared a purported suicide note blaming the Election Commission. Senior BJP leader Rahul Sinha, however, dismissed the note as "fake."

Two teachers serving as BLOs in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen and Damoh districts also died on Friday, with officials attributing the deaths to illness.

The EC has not issued a detailed response to the allegations. *—PTI*

- Citing a media report claiming 16 BLO deaths in 19 days, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said the BJP's "vote chori" had taken a "deadly turn".

Post Karur stampede, Vijay resumes poll campaign

CHENNAI, 23 NOV

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhgam (TVK) Chief **Vijay** on Sunday resumed his campaign from Kancheepuram for the 2026 Assembly election after a break of nearly two months following the Karur stampede and without directly naming the ruling DMK, accused it of a 'loot' of Rs 4,730 crore via illegal sand mining.

This was the time he has resumed campaigning after stampede that had left many dead and injured several others. He had also launched his first outreach initiative from Kancheepuram in January this year after the launch of his party.

He also indirectly levelled the allegation of dynasty politics against it and claimed that the ruling party had forgotten its founder CN Annadurai's diktat of 'go to the people.'

He said this while addressing a crowd in Kancheepuram district.

He said that Palar River, the lifeline of Kancheepuram region, has been degraded and ruined by those merely using the names of social reformer "Periyar" EV Ramasamy and Anna.

He said about 22.70 lakh units of sand was mined by exceeding the permitted level. *—PTI*

Palakkad: CPI(M) supporter found hanging in office

PALAKKAD, 23 NOV

A supporter of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) was discovered hanging at the party's local body election office in Padalikkad on Sunday morning, police have confirmed. The deceased has been identified as 40-year-old Sivan from Padalikkad, Kottekkad.

According to the First Information Report (FIR), Sivan was found at approximately 7.30am in the temporary CPI(M) election office. His family reported that he left home early that morning, with some locals stating they had seen him near the Padalikkad bus stop around 5am.

While initial investigations suggest it may be a case of suicide, authorities have yet to determine the exact cause of death. A police officer stated, "We suspect it to be a case of suicide, though the cause is yet to be confirmed."

The Malampuzha police have registered a case of unnatural death and are currently conducting an investigation, which will include taking statements from family members. The body will be handed over to relatives following a postmortem examination, as per police statements. *—PTI*

Kochi court allows NIA to probe PFI in palm chopping

KOCHI, 23 NOV

A court in Kochi has granted the National Investigation Agency (NIA) permission to conduct a further investigation into the Popular Front of India (PFI) activist accused of sheltering the main suspect in the 2010 palm-chopping case of Professor **TJ Joseph**.

Judge PK Mohandas of the Special Court for NIA cases approved the agency's request, submitted on 20 November.

Professor Joseph, from Newman College, Thodupuzha, was targeted by a group who severed his right palm, claiming he committed blasphemy in a question paper he created in July 2010.

The NIA has already convicted 19 individuals in this case, with the main suspect, Savad, arrested in January 2024, hiding under the alias Shajahan.

Another suspect, Shafeer C, allegedly provided shelter and support to Savad since 2020. NIA stated that its ongoing probe is necessary to gather additional scientific evidence & ascertain involvement of others in the conspiracy.

The court, after considering the arguments presented, concluded, "Further investigation is necessary to collect more evidence and identify the role of other suspects." *—PTI*

Removed from party for raising core concerns: NPP Manipur ex-interim chief

IMPHAL, 23 NOV

A day after Dr **Lorho S Pfoze** was appointed as the Manipur unit president of the National People's Party (NPP), its former interim chief Yumnam Joykumar claimed on Sunday that he was removed for raising issues related to the state's core concerns.

"I may be removed from the party as well," Joykumar told reporters.

The former Manipur police chief-turned-politician said that during a recent party meeting, he and other members had sought the stand of the proposed new North East party on matters concerning the Meitei community, Manipur's territorial integrity, demands for separate administration, and the issue of Greater Nagalim.

"We had said we will not compromise on these issues," he added.

A Meitei, Joykumar said, "The core concerns of the proposed North East party seem to be mostly tribal-oriented. I had told them that the political dynamics of each state are different. The political dynamics of Manipur is different from Meghalaya, and I asked if Manipur's concerns will be included in the proposed new party."

"We didn't get a clear cut answers during the meeting," he claimed.

Earlier this month, leaders from four different parties of the northeast, including Meghalaya Chief Minister and National People's Party president Conrad Sangma, announced that they would form a single political entity to raise issues of the region.

Pradyot Manikya of Tipra Motha, Daniel Langthasa from People's Party, Assam, and BJP spokesperson Mmhonlumo Kikon were among the signatories of a joint statement that announced the decision in New Delhi. *—PTI*

DEMANDS PUBLIC APOLOGY

NCP seeks action over Ajit's 'vote for funds'

NAGPUR, 23 NOV

NCP (SP) leader and Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule on Sunday said the Election Commission of India (ECI) must monitor remarks like the one made by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar linking development funds to voter support.

Her party spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said the EC must take immediate action, while Pawar must issue a public apology.

During an election campaign in Pune, Pawar said he would ensure there was no shortage of funds for the town if they elected his party's candidates, but if they rejected them, he would also "reject".

"….. years dissatisfaction can be seen with the EC in society and newspapers," the Baramati MP claimed.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar *PHOTO: PTI*

The remarks amount to an explicit threat against the democratic rights of the people, NCP (SP) spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said.

He said funds are given from the taxes paid by the common people and they must be used for the all-around development of the state and all its citizens, irrespective of whether a chosen candidate wins or loses an election.

To explicitly link development aid to electoral success is a corrupt practice and a gross misuse of the power entrusted to the finance minister and the NCP (SP) demands immediate and stringent action from the Election Commission of India, Tapase said.

Tapase also sought to know how Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP central leadership tolerated such remarks from an ally. *—PTI*

- During an election campaign in Pune, Pawar said he would ensure there was no shortage of funds for the town if they elected his party's candidates, but if they rejected them, he would also "reject".

M'rashtra Minister's PA's wife allegedly dies by suicide

MUMBAI, 23 NOV

The wife of Maharashtra Minister Pankaja Munde's personal assistant allegedly died by suicide at her home in central Mumbai, police said on Sunday.

Gauri Palve, married to Anant Garje, PA to the Maharashtra Animal Husbandry and Environment Minister, was found hanging at her Worli residence on Saturday evening, an official said. The couple, who wed in February this year, lived in Worli. Palve worked as a doctor in the dental department of the civic-run KEM Hospital, police added.

According to officers, Palve's family has alleged that she was tortured and harassed by Garje, claiming the alleged abuse pushed her to end her life. They have demanded a detailed investigation into the circumstances leading to her death. Police said preliminary information points to domestic disputes as the likely trigger. An accidental death report has been registered, and a probe is underway to verify the family's allegations and determine whether abetment charges are warranted.

Officials said statements from relatives, neighbours and colleagues will be recorded, and forensic reports are awaited. *—PTI*

- According to officers, Palve's family has alleged that she was tortured and harassed by Garje, claiming the alleged abuse pushed her to end her life.

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

PHOTO: FILE PHOTO

Man kills wife, children before suicide in J'khand

DHUMA, 23 NOV

Four members of a family were found dead on Sunday morning in Bardahi village under Hansdiha police station in Jharkhand's Dumka district, police said. The deceased were Virendra Manjhi, 30, his wife Aarti Kumari, 26, their daughter Ruhi, 4, and son Viraj, 2. SP Pitambar Singh Kherwar said initial findings point to a marital dispute. Aarti had returned on Friday after staying with her parents for seven months. Their daughter had long-term health issues, and the family faced "severe financial stress," he said. Police believe an argument on Saturday night escalated, after which Manjhi allegedly strangled his wife and children before taking extreme step by hanging self. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. *—PTI*

Man compensated with Rs 54L for 2018 road accident

THANE, 23 NOV

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) of Thane in Maharashtra ordered that a compensation of Rs 54 lakh be given to a man, who had sustained serious injuries in a road accident in 2018. Rajendra Digambar Jamdar, 55, was injured on 23 May that year after he had fallen from the motorcycle on which he had been riding pillion while it was trying to avoid a collision with an autorickshaw at Ovla Naka. At the time, Jamdar was a sales manager with an automobile dealership and drew a salary of Rs 41,000. MACT member Rupali Mohite ordered compensation of Rs 54,59,930, including Rs 29,49,492 towards loss of his future income. *—PTI*

UP kiln workers report falling of large ice from sky

BADAUN, 23 NOV

A large ice chunk reportedly fell from the sky near a brick kiln in Deennagar Sheikhpur village in the Bilsi area in Uttar Pradesh's Badaun on Sunday, narrowly missing labourers working at the site. However, no one was injured in the incident and an inquiry is underway to determine the source of the ice. According to eyewitness Somendra Yadav, the ice chunk looked "as big as a large stone" and shattered on impact. Another labourer, Veer Singh, said they were stacking bricks when the block of ice came crashing down. "It must have weighed around 50 kg," he said. A police team also arrived at the site for inspection. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Singers promoting gang life are alike criminals: DGP

CHANDIGARH, 23 NOV

Haryana DGP OP Singh on Sunday directed police officers to treat singers who promote gang lifestyles through songs and videos as criminals and initiate strict legal action against them. He said such content undermines parental guidance, classroom learning and social discipline, and can "adversely affect youth". Haryana Police had earlier begun action against music that allegedly glorifies violence or gun culture, with cyber units monitoring social media and taking down several videos. Singh praised the success of "Operation Trackdown", launched on 5 November, which has led to 4,566 arrests, including 1,439 wanted offenders. Singh urged officers to secure convictions and dismantle supporting criminal networks. *—PTI*

Probe into Al-Falah biased against Muslims: Madani

BJP says he is giving a communal spin to ongoing terror probe

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

A political row erupted after Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind chief Maulana Arshad Madani alleged discrimination against Muslims while referring to the investigation into Al Falah University, which is under scrutiny in the Delhi blast probe.

His comments drew a sharp response from the BJP, which accused him of giving a communal spin to an ongoing terror investigation.

Addressing a session at the Jamiat headquarters, Madani said Muslims overseas were rising to top public positions while those in India were being marginalised. "A Muslim, Mamdani, can become the mayor of New York; a Khan can become mayor of London. In India, no one can even become a university vice-chancellor," he said. He claimed even those appointed were jailed, citing Al Falah University founder Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui.

Madani alleged the government was ensuring Muslims "never raise their heads".

Jamiat Chief Madani said that while Zohran Mamdani can become New York mayor, in India, Muslims cannot even become a VC *PHOTO: ANI*

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla dismissed his claims, saying the "aatanki bachao jamaat (save terrorists group)" had become active. He argued India had seen Muslims serve as President, Vice President, Chief Justice and Home Minister, and accused some leaders of defending terror suspects for "vote-bank reasons", naming P Chidambaram, Hussain Dalwai, Imran Masood and Mehbooba Mufti.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said former President APJ Abdul Kalam remained an icon for Indian Muslims, while BJP leader Shahnawaz Hussain termed Madani's remarks "very irresponsible".

- BJP spokesperson Poonawalla dismissed his claim, saying, "in the name of vote bank, the 'bhaijann of appeasement' and the 'aatanki bachao jamaat (save terrorists group)' has become active"

Al Falah University is under intensified scrutiny following the 10 November Red Fort blast. "Suicide bomber" Dr Umar Un Nabi was a professor there, while another staffer, Dr Mujammil Shakeel, is linked to a major explosives haul.

The ED recently searched several locations and arrested Siddiqui in a separate money-laundering case tied to alleged fund violations.

Two FIRs have been filed against the university, and the AIU has revoked its membership. *—PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Security personnel inspect lockers at a hospital, in Kulgam *PHOTO: PTI*

White-collar terror: Docs' radicalisation started in 2019

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Investigators probing the 10 November Red Fort blast have found that the radicalisation of doctors in a "white-collar" terror module began on social media in 2019.

Officials said handlers based in Pakistan and other countries identified young professionals on Facebook and X before moving them to encrypted Telegram groups, where indoctrination deepened.

The accused, Dr Muzammil Ganaie, Dr Adeel Rather, Dr Muzzafar Rather and Dr Umar-un-Nabi, who drove the explosive-laden car, allegedly used YouTube to study IED-making under handlers identified as Ukasa, Faizan and Hashmi.

Nearly 2,900 kg of explosive material was later recovered from locations linked to the group, including a rented house near Faridabad's Al Falah University.

Haryana preacher Maulvi Ishtiyaq, detained after the recovery, told police the doctors paid him Rs 2,500 a month to store what they called "fertilisers" and remained fixated on six months of unpaid rent during questioning.

His account was confirmed by Ganaie. The investigation commenced after Jaish-e-Mohammed posters appeared outside Srinagar on 18–19 October, leading investigators to a digital recruitment chain driven by encrypted, cross-border radicalisation. *—PTI*

NCB seizes 328kg meth worth Rs 262 crore from Delhi, 2 held

COIMBATORE, 23 NOV

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the Delhi Police Special Cell have busted a major transnational methamphetamine cartel with the seizure of 328 kg of high-purity meth worth around Rs 262 crore from a residence in Delhi's Chhatarpur, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said on Sunday.

The joint crackdown, codenamed Operation Crystal Fortress, was launched after months of intelligence-driven surveillance aimed at dismantling high-volume synthetic drug networks operating across borders.

Two individuals, including a Nagaland-based woman whose Chhatarpur home was used as a storage and transit point, were arrested on 20 November. The woman was detained with support from Nagaland Police. Officials described the seizure as among the largest methamphetamine recoveries in the national capital.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah congratulated both agencies, saying the government was "shattering drug cartels at unprecedented pace".

In a post on X, he said the 328-kg seizure reflected the success of a "top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top" investigative approach designed to dismantle entire supply chains rather than individual couriers. Shah hailed the action as a "brilliant example of seamless multi-agency coordination" supporting the goal of a drug-free India.

According to the MHA, the breakthrough is the result of sustained technical surveillance, intelligence inputs and targeted monitoring of suspected operatives.

Investigators have identified several members of the trafficking network, including the alleged kingpin, who is currently abroad.

He is also wanted in an earlier NCB case involving the recovery of 82.5 kg of high-grade cocaine in Delhi last year. Efforts are underway, in coordination with international enforcement partners, to secure his deportation to India for trial.

Preliminary findings indicate the cartel used multiple couriers, temporary safe-houses and layered handlers to transport the contraband.

Delhi served as a key hub for storage and redistribution, with shipments routed both within India and to overseas markets through covert channels.

Officials said the operational structure relied heavily on compartmentalisation, ensuring that couriers, handlers and local facilitators knew only limited details of the larger network.

The MHA said evidence recovered from the Chhatarpur location, including digital records, packaging material and communication devices, suggests the syndicate maintained an extensive logistical chain designed to evade surveillance. *—PTI*

Cal HC directs bank to file reports on tri-language use

KOLKATA, 23 NOV

The Calcutta High Court has directed banks to file reports on their compliance with an RBI circular mandating the use of English, Hindi and the relevant regional language in all branch-level documents and customer-facing material.

The order came during the hearing of a petition by Bangla Pokkho Charitable Trust, which sought full enforcement of the 2014 circular in West Bengal, including mandatory Bengali usage. The NGO said many banks still display forms and notices mainly in English or Hindi.

A division bench noted that SBI and several lenders have already submitted reports detailing their trilingual adoption. Banks yet to comply were told to file reports before the next hearing in early December.

The court recorded that Punjab National Bank had earlier committed to implementing the circular, which requires trilingual indicator boards and printed material for retail customers. *—PTI*

CREMATED IN HP'S KANGRA

Grief and honours mark farewell to Tejas pilot Syal

COIMBATORE, 23 NOV

Wing Commander Namansh Syal, who died in the Tejas crash during the Dubai Air Show, was cremated with full military honours in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra district on Sunday.

Namansh's wife, an IAF officer, gave a final salute as their six-year-old daughter clung to her, while his cousin lit the pyre in the presence of Air Force personnel, officials and hundreds of locals who gathered to pay tribute to "Nammu".

Syal, in his mid-30s, was remembered as an exceptional athlete and a dedicated officer who, locals said, "set an example even in death by diverting the aircraft to save thousands at the air show".

His mortal remains received with honours at Sulur Air Force Base in Tamil Nadu.

They were then flown to Gaggal airport and later taken to his native Patiyalkar village in a flower-decked Army truck, where a long convoy of military and civilian vehicles followed.

Emotional crowds lined the route, chanting patriotic slogans.

His father said the country had lost one of its finest aerobatic pilots. *—PTI*

SC to hear Wangchuk's detention plea on 24 Nov

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Supreme Court of India is scheduled to hear a plea on 24 November challenging the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act. The appeal, filed by Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, alleges that his detention is illegal and an arbitrary exercise violating his fundamental rights.

Wangchuk was detained on 26 September, following violent protests in Ladakh. Angmo's amended plea states that the detention order is based on "stale FIRs, vague imputations, and speculative assertions," lacking any valid justification.

"It is wholly preposterous that after over three decades of recognition for his contributions, Wangchuk would suddenly be targeted," the plea argues, highlighting a series of coordinated actions against him shortly before elections.

Wangchuk condemned the violence on social media, stating that it marked "the saddest day of his life."

The complete grounds for detention were reportedly provided to him after a delay of 28 days, violating statutory timelines. *—PTI*

Pilot booked for sexual assault of crew member

HYDERABAD, 23 NOV

A case has been registered against the pilot of a chartered flight for allegedly sexually assaulting a 26-year-old cabin crew member at a Bengaluru hotel, police said on Sunday. Although the incident occurred on 18 November, the woman filed a complaint at Begumpet Police Station after returning to Hyderabad. Officers registered a Zero FIR under relevant sections of BNS and immediately transferred the case to Halasuru Police Station in Bengaluru, which has jurisdiction. "After returning to Hyderabad, the member lodged the complaint here and the case after filing, which was moved to Bengaluru," a Begumpet police official said. *—PTI*

J&K cops seize drug suspect's Rs 35L assets

J&K police seizes car of drug peddler in Budgam *PHOTO: X*

SRINAGAR, 23 NOV

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday attached immovable property worth about Rs 35 lakh belonging to a suspected drug peddler in Budgam, officials said. A police spokesperson stated that the double-storey house in Magam belongs to Hilal Ahmad Mir, alias Hilal Galwan, who is an accused in an NDPS case. Police also seized his car.

The spokesperson said the investigation established that Mir had acquired the assets using "proceeds of illicit narcotics trafficking". The property and vehicle were seized under Section 68-F of the NDPS Act after all legal procedures were completed. Officials said the action underscores the J&K Police's zero-tolerance stance on drug trafficking. *—PTI*

ARMS FURNACES DESTROYED

Pune cops bust illegal arms unit in MP, detain 36

PUNE, 23 NOV

Pune police have busted a major inter-state illegal arms racket operating from Umarti village in Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district, detaining 36 people and seizing a large cache of weapons.

The action followed the recovery of 21 pistols in Pune over the past three weeks, which investigators traced to illegal manufacturing units in MP. A joint team of Pune and MP police destroyed 50 furnaces used to make the weapons.

Joint Commissioner of Police Ranjan Kumar Sharma said multiple inputs during investigations in Vimantal and Kalepadal police stations pointed to Umarti as a key hub. Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said they had resolved to destroy units supplying pistols to Pune despite the threat of resistance from locals. The accused will face charges under MCOCA.

Pune and MP Police dismantle large illegal arms manufacturing network; 36 detained *PHOTO: X/PUNEPOLICE*

- The crackdown, carried out with MP police, followed the recovery of pistols in Pune over the past three weeks, which investigators traced to the MP-based units

Kumar said the pistol used to kill gangster Sharad Mohol also came from Umarti, adding that several Pune gangs sourced weapons from the village. A 105-member Pune police team led by DCP Somay Munde took part, with personnel set to receive rewards for their role. *—PTI*

Delhi air quality still 'very poor'

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The air quality in Delhi remained in the 'very poor' category on Sunday morning, with the air quality index (AQI) recorded at 381, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

According to the data from the CPCB's Sameer app, 13 monitoring stations in Delhi reported air quality in the 'severe' category, while 25 stations recorded 'very poor' air quality with readings above 300.

The minimum temperature settled at 14 degrees Celsius, while the humidity was recorded at 86 per cent at 8.30am, as per the Indian Meteorological Department.

The maximum temperature is likely to hover around 26 degrees Celsius, with the weather department forecasting shallow fog during the day. *—PTI*

Foreign tourists wearing face masks, visit Kartavya Path during a smoggy winter morning, in New Delhi, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

5,000 KM... ROAD TO PEACE

Transgender social activist Malem Thongam from Manipur is cycling 5,000km to spread a message of peace. Her journey started in New Delhi and has reached West Bengal at a time when Manipur is living with deadly ethnic violence for almost 3 years now. Thongam's ride began on 2 October and will end in Manipur after Assam

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

SIR sparks reverse migration of 'illegal Bangladeshis' in WB

Beside a pitch road that opens into a narrow, dusty mud bylane at the Hakimpur BSF border outpost in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas, a stretch has become an informal departure corridor for "illegal Bangladeshis", who lived in the state for years.

Under a sprawling banyan tree, families with small cloth bags, children clutching plastic bottles, and men waiting on their haunches formed a silent queue on Saturday, repeating a single plea before BSF personnel: "Let us go home."

Across the South Bengal border belt, security personnel and local residents say the number of undocumented Bangladeshi nationals attempting to return to their country has risen sharply since early November.

The movement has taken the shape of an unusual reverse migration, which officials and they themselves link directly to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls underway in West Bengal.

Shahin Bibi, identifying herself as a resident of Khulna district who worked as a domestic help in New Town near Kolkata, waited with her toddler by the roadside.

Many in the queue admit they procured Aadhaar cards, ration cards or voter IDs through touts and middlemen during their stay in West Bengal.

With SIR demanding verification of older documents, several said they preferred leaving rather than risking questioning and possible detention.

"No more staying here," said a young waiter, who lived in Kolkata for eight years.

The concern is echoed across the queue of men, women and families who arrived from areas such as New Town, Birati, Dhulagori, Bamangachi, Ghusuri and parts of Howrah's industrial belt.

A few had been in the state for over a decade; others arrived only a few years ago.

Bangladeshi nationals, who allegedly entered Indian territory illegally, await to return to their homeland following the implementation of the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, at Hakimpur checkpost in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal

PHOTO: PTI

Border officials confirm the surge.

They say 150-200 people a day are being detained and pushed back after verification. The queues began swelling from 4 November, the day the SIR exercise began.

"We cannot assume everyone here is simply returning home," a BSF officer said.

Because of the volume, delays of two to three days are common. People wait outside the outpost gate on plastic sheets, newspapers or under halted trucks.

BSF personnel provide meals to those inside the camp, but people waiting outside depend on roadside stalls or occasional food distribution by local youth and shopkeepers. A plate of rice with egg costs Rs 40; rice with fish Rs 60.

A group of men from Satkhira said they paid between Rs 5,000 and Rs 7,000 to enter West Bengal earlier. Others spent significantly more.

"I paid nearly Rs 20,000 to get documents," said 29-year-old Manirul Sheikh, who worked in garment units in Dhulagori and collected scrap iron.

"Everyone knew which middleman to approach. But, SIR changed everything. Now, people want to leave before the checking catches up."

Another man, Imran Gazi, said softly: "I voted in 2016, 2019, 2021 and 2024. But, I have no papers from 2002. Hence, I am leaving."

The surge has also strained local policing.

"We had 95 detainees in two days. No station has the space or facilities to hold so many. We stopped taking custody after that," an officer said.

On Saturday afternoon, a six-year-old girl tugged at her mother's scarf and whispered, "I will miss my friends in New Town." Her mother, carrying a newborn, said they paid 25,000 Bangladeshi taka last year to cross into West Bengal.

Local shopkeepers and traders say they want the situation to stabilise soon.

"Let Delhi, Dhaka and Kolkata fight their political battles. These people should not be suffering on the road," said a member of the Hakimpur Traders' Association, who supervised volunteers distributing khichri.

The SIR exercise has also sharpened political confrontation in the state ahead of the 2026 assembly elections.

The BJP alleges the ruling TMC allowed "large-scale infiltration for electoral gains", while the state government accuses the Centre of "weaponising" the process to target vulnerable communities and create panic.

At Hakimpur, this debate seems distant.

Officials said around 1,200 people have returned to Bangladesh after undergoing official procedures in the past six days. Nearly 60 people were still waiting on Saturday.

As the sun dipped behind the barbed fence, a BSF jawan watched the line snake down the mud road.

For the families waiting under a banyan tree, clutching small bags, wrapping children against the cold, and waiting for their turn, SIR is no longer an administrative exercise. It has become the push toward an uncertain return after years spent on borrowed names, documents and soil. *—PTI*

SALAR

Andaman & Nicobar plans new islands for tourists

The Andaman and Nicobar government is analysing the impact of opening new islands and the rising influx of tourists in the archipelago to ensure the preservation of the ecosystem while ensuring more islands are opened in a graded manner, officials said.

The island Union Territory known for its pristine beaches and mangrove kayaking tours, has witnessed a significant jump in domestic tourism since pre-Covid years.

"We had a very successful tourist season last year. We were able to overcome the effects of Covid-19, and last year, on an island with a population of 4 lakh, we welcomed 7.2 lakh visitors. This year, we are experiencing substantial growth as well. We have already recorded 6 lakh visitors by September, and our peak season is during October and November," Jyoti Kumari, Tourism Secretary of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, told PTI.

When asked about the ecological concerns associated with the rising number of tourists, she said, "As an island, we have a carrying capacity. Our advantage is that access is limited to flights, which naturally restricts the number of visitors. That said, the impact on frequently visited islands is minimal. We are opening new islands and exploring different niche segments."

The tourism secretary explained that the government recently opened North Sink Island and will continue to open more islands in a graded manner.

"We are proceeding carefully to gauge the response and see how visitors are adapting. We are also opening more areas; the forest department has opened Jolly Buoy and Red Skin Islands, which have a carrying capacity of 200 people. We are ensuring that this limit is maintained."

"This is how we are preserving and promoting the ecosystem. Recently, 21 islands have been opened, and we continue to monitor the impact. Once these islands are fully utilised, we will consider further openings," she added.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands provide an idyllic blend of palm-fringed beaches, white sand stretches extending for miles, unperturbed serenity and crystal-clear turquoise waters that epitomise a tropical paradise.

Discussing plans to diversify the tourism experience in the Andamans, Kumari highlighted a focus on bird-watching and astro-tourism.

"We have a huge number of people coming for bird watching because the Andaman features 32 varieties of endemic birds. So, a lot of bird watchers come to increase their count in a single day. We are also looking at astro-tourism because Andaman has one of the best night skies. Visitors can see both northern and southern constellations.

"There are vantage points that provide 360-degree views of the sky, allowing observation in all directions. The area has zero industrial pollution, which enhances our efforts in promoting astro-tourism. Fishing is also a popular activity among both domestic and international tourists, and we are working to promote that, along with our renowned water sports," she explained.

The Union Territory recently launched an astro-tourism policy. "Under this policy, we are registering and training guides besides implementing open sky certification for them. Additionally, we are training local youth and manpower for this initiative. We are designating locations that can be protected from light pollution as potential astro-tourism spots," Kumari said.

"Tourists can also register with us, although this is optional. Once they register on our portal, they will receive extensive information about upcoming astronomical events, allowing them to plan their visits accordingly," she added. *—PTI*

The Union Territory recently launched an astro-tourism policy

PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS

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New US sanctions threaten to disrupt India's Russian oil lifeline

- Tighter enforcement would suppress volumes further, while lighter-touch implementation could allow some recovery through intermediaries.

India's crude oil imports from Russia, at 1.7 million bpd this year, remained firm ahead of the cutoff. With refiners getting discounts, November arrivals are projected at 1.8-1.9 million bpd

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's imports of Russian crude oil - the feedstock for fuels like petrol and diesel - are expected to drop sharply in the near term but not halt entirely as new US sanctions on Moscow's top oil exporters take full effect, analysts said.

US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, and their majority-owned subsidiaries, took effect on 21 November, effectively turning crude linked to these firms into a "sanctioned molecule".

India's crude oil imports from Russia, averaging 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, remained firm ahead of the cutoff, with November arrivals projected at 1.8-1.9 million bpd, as refiners maximise discounted purchases. But flows are expected to drop noticeably in December and January, with analysts estimating near-term declines to around 4,00,000 bpd.

Traditionally, reliant on Middle Eastern oil, India significantly increased its imports from Russia following the February 2022 Ukraine invasion.

Western sanctions and reduced European demand made Russian oil available at steep discounts. As a result, India's Russian crude imports surged from under 1 per cent to nearly 40 per cent of its total crude oil imports in a short span. In November, Russia continued to be India's top supplier, making up for about a third of all crude oil imported by the country.

"We expect a noticeable drop in Russian crude flows to India in the near term, particularly through December and January. Loadings have already slowed since 21 October, though it is still early for definitive conclusions, given Russia's agility in deploying intermediaries, shadow fleets, and workaround financing," said Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst, Refining & Modeling, Kpler.

The sanctions have resulted in companies like Reliance Industries, HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd halting imports for now. The only exception is Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy, which is majorly dependent on Russian crude after supplies from the rest of the world were effectively cut off, following European Union sanctions on it.

Sanctions announced by the US target specific companies, not all Russian oil or all Russian producers. This means that crude supplied by non-designated Russian entities, for example, Surgutneftegaz, Gazprom Neft, or independent traders using non-sanctioned intermediaries, can still be legally purchased by Indian refiners, as long as no sanctioned entity, vessel, bank, or service provider is involved.

The discounted Russian crude helped Indian refiners - from public sector Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) to private sector Reliance Industries Ltd - post bumper profits in the last two years. It also helped keep retail petrol and diesel prices stable despite volatility in the international market, on which India is 88 per cent dependent to meet its oil needs.

India's crude oil import landscape is entering a period of sharp uncertainty as new US sanctions on top Russian exporters took full effect, forcing refiners to reassess Russian supply channels that have dominated their purchases for over three years.

While Russian barrels will not disappear from India's slate, flows are expected to decline sharply in the near term and grow more opaque as Moscow and Indian buyers adjust to tightening restrictions, analysts said.

Reliance Industries - the world's biggest buyer of seaborne Russian crude - confirmed it stopped importing Russian oil into its 7,04,000 bpd export-oriented SEZ refinery on 20 November to ensure compliance with upcoming EU rules banning fuels derived from Russian crude.

From 1 December, all product exports from the Jamnagar SEZ unit will be derived exclusively from non-Russian crude. Reliance will, however, honour pre-committed Russian cargoes placed before the 22 October sanctions announcement, routing any post-deadline arrivals to its separate 6,60,000 bpd domestic-market refinery.

The company declined to clarify whether it would continue buying non-sanctioned Russian crude for the domestic facility, reiterating only that it would comply with all sanctions.

Tighter enforcement would suppress volumes further, while lighter-touch implementation could allow some recovery through intermediaries.

Until refiners gain clarity on compliant pathways - including secure non-sanctioned counterparties, shipping and insurance availability, and workable banking solutions - India's imports from Russia will remain in choppy waters, marked by short-term disruptions (lower arrivals) and frequent shifts in sourcing patterns, he said.

India's highly complex refineries can replace Russian barrels technically, though margins may tighten.

To offset reduced direct Russian liftings, refiners are expected to increase procurement from the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE and Kuwait), Latin America (Brazil, Guyana, Colombia and Argentina), West Africa and North America (the US and Canada), Ritolia said.

"Despite near-term declines, a complete halt to Russian imports is unlikely. Discounted Russian barrels remain attractive for margins, and India's energy policy continues to prioritise affordability and security over geopolitical pressure.

Unless secondary sanctions directly target Indian buyers or New Delhi imposes formal restrictions - both low-probability scenarios - Russian crude will keep flowing to India, though via increasingly diversified and less transparent channels," he added. *—PTI*

Death toll in Vietnam floods rises to 90

HANOI, 23 NOV

The death toll from severe flooding in Vietnam has risen to 90 dead, with at least 12 still missing, officials said. Thousands of homes have damaged or destroyed, local media reported on Sunday. This is a sharp increase from Saturday's update of 55 deaths and 13 missing. Relentless rain across the Central Highlands regions since late October has caused extensive devastation, according to Vietnam News Agency (VNA). Several locations on national highways remained blocked on Sunday due to flooding or landslides, according to the environment ministry, and some sections of railways were still suspended. Forecasters predict heavy rain of up to 250mm in several regions from 23–25 November. *—ANI*

Pakistanis vote in bypolls for 13 seats amid tight security

ISLAMABAD, 23 NOV

Voting is underway in Pakistan on Sunday for by-elections to 13 National Assembly and Punjab Assembly seats amid heavy security. Out of the 13 seats, six are for the National Assemblyand seven are for the provincial seats. Most seats were vacated after Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers were disqualified over alleged involvement in the 9 May, 2023 attacks on infrastructure protesting the arrest of party leader Imran Khan. Six contests are for the National Assembly, including key races in Haripur, Faisalabad, Lahore, Sahiwal and Dera Ghazi Khan; seven are for the Punjab Assembly. Over 20,000 security personnel were deployed, with many positioned at "most sensitive" stations. Analysts view the bypolls as a gauge of support for ruling parties. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Indian-origin man among 25 most wanted in Canada

TORONTO, 23 NOV

Toronto police have arrested Nicholas Singh, a 24-year-old Toronto resident of Indian origin, who was on Canada's BOLO Program list of the 25 Most Wanted fugitives. According to a Toronto Police release, Singh is wanted nationwide for breach of parole. He was located in a vehicle near Bathurst and Dupont around 11.20pm on 21 November and arrested without incident. Police said they also recovered a firearm, extended magazine and ammunition. Singh, who had been unlawfully at large since 2024, was serving a sentence for robbery and firearm offences. He now faces six new firearm-related charges and appeared before the court on Saturday. *—Agencies*

50 children abducted in Nigeria escape

ABAJU, 23 NOV

Fifty of the 303 schoolchildren abducted from a Catholic school in north-central Nigeria's Niger state have escaped captivity and are now with their families, the school authority said Sunday, bringing relief to some distraught families after one of the largest school abductions in Nigeria's history. The schoolchildren, aged between 10 and 18, escaped individually between Friday and Saturday, according to the Most Rev Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Niger state and the proprietor of the school. A total of 253 schoolchildren and 12 teachers are still held by the kidnappers. It was not immediately clear where the Niger state children were being held or how they managed to return home. *—PTI*

Trump says Ukraine plan is not the final offer

Ukraine & US delegates meet to discuss 28-point plan

Donald Trump; Volodymyr Zelenskyy; Vladimir Putin *PHOTO: PTI*

WASHINGTON/GENEVA, 23 NOV

US President Donald Trump said that his 28-point peace deal to settle the Russia-Ukraine war was not the "final offer" as Ukraine and Western allies gathered in Geneva on Sunday to has out details.

"One way or another we have to get it [the war] ended, so we're working on it," Trump told press at the White House. He has given Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy until Thursday to accept the plan, adding that the US "holds all the cards." However, he has said that he would be flexible with the deadline if things were going well.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, the head of the Ukrainian delegation, Presidential Chief of Staff Andrii Yermak, said they held their first meeting with the national security advisers from the UK, France and Germany. The allies have rallied around Kyiv in a push to revise the plan, which is seen as favouring Moscow.

The deal has several contentious elements, including territorial concessions, Ukraine cutting its army by half and blocking Kyiv's path into NATO. On Saturday, leaders from Europe, Canada and Japan said the plan had elements "essential for a just and lasting peace", but would "require additional work"

Alice Rufo, France's minister delegate at the Defence Ministry, said on Sunday that key points of discussion would include the plan's restrictions on the Ukrainian army, which she described as "a limitation on its sovereignty."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was expected to join the talks together with Army Secretary Dan Driscoll and Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff.

"The next meeting is with the US delegation. We are in a very constructive mood," Yermak said.

RUSSIAN OR AMERICAN PLAN?

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday that Warsaw was ready to work on the plan, but remarked "would be good to know for sure who is the author of the plan and where it was created."

A bipartisan group of US senators said Saturday that Rubio had described the plan as a Russian "wish list" rather than a Washington-led proposal.

Rubio, however, has denied the assertion. *—Agencies*

US ISSUES AVIATION ALERT NEAR VENEZUELA, TESTS BOMBS

WASHINGTON, 23 NOV

The US issued an updated aviation alert for airspace near Venezuela as President Donald Trump authorised the use of a B-52 nuclear-capable bomber for what officials referred to as an "attack demo."

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) circulated a Notice to Airmen cautioning pilots, airlines and air traffic personnel about a "potentially hazardous situation" arising from increased security risks and heightened military activity in and around Venezuelan airspace.

Soon after the advisory was released, the Air Force confirmed that a B-52, supported by KC-135 Stratotankers and fighter jets, conducted a bomber attack demonstration in the US Southern Command region. Officials said the operation forms part of ongoing missions targeting drug trafficking networks believed to have links to Venezuela.

The FAA alert applies to the Maiquetia Flight Information Region. *—ANI*

CANCER FIGHTING JFK'S GRANDCHILD SLAMS RKF JR

NEW YORK, 23 NOV

John F Kennedy's granddaughter disclosed Saturday that she has terminal cancer, writing in an essay in The New Yorker that one of her doctors said she might live for about another year.

Tatiana Schlossberg, the daughter of Kennedy's daughter, Caroline Kennedy, and Edwin Schlossberg, wrote that she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia in May 2024 at 34. It is a rare mutation, seen in older people. She said that her cousin, Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr's, policies could hurt cancer patients like her. *—PTI*

Smoke rises following an Israeli military attack east of Nuseirat, as seen from central Gaza strip on 21 November *PHOTO: PTI*

Israel has violated ceasefire 500 times in 44 days: Gaza

DEIR AL-BALAH, 22 NOV

Israel has violated the US-brokered ceasefire in Gaza at least 497 times in 44 days, the Gaza Government Media Office said in a statement on Sunday. This comes a day after Israel's military on Saturday launched airstrikes in Gaza killing at least 24 people and injuring 54 others, including others according to the Health Department.

The ceasefire came in effect on 10 October, but has been tested multiple with Israel saying it has been targeting Hamas militants. Some 342 civilians have been killed in the attacks, with children, women and the elderly accounting for the majority of the victims, Gaza's government said.

The UN Security Council on Monday approved a US blueprint to allow international forces into the territory.

One of Saturday's strikes targeted a vehicle, killing 11 and wounding over 20 Palestinians in Gaza City's Rimal neighbourhood, said Rami Mhanna, managing director of Shifa Hospital. The majority of the wounded were children.

MOSSAD CLAIMS TO BUST EUROPEAN HAMAS WING

Israel's intelligence service Mossad alleged that Hamas has been cultivating an operational network across Europe, working through covert cells.

European partners helped disrupt plots aimed at Israeli and Jewish communities, a statement said.

Several suspects were detained in joint operations in countries such as Germany and Austria. Mossad also claimed to have seized weapon stockpiles prepared for use "on command" against the civilians. *—Agencies*

Oppn vows to topple Sri Lankan govt at 'first opportunity'

COLOMBO, 23 NOV

Accusing the National People's Power (NPP) government of failing to deliver on its pre-election promises, Sri Lanka's Opposition party, led by former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, has warned that it would move to topple the administration at the "first opportunity".

Since sweeping the 2024 elections, the NPP government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, has pursued cases against members of the previous Rajapaksa administration. Several were jailed or granted bail on corruption charges.

Addressing a rally in the Colombo suburb of Nugegoda Mahinda's son, Namal Rajapaksa, accused the NPP government of failing to deliver on its pre-election promises.

In an apparent reference to several of his party members being jailed or on bail for corruption, Namal said he would not be intimidated by government actions.

The large turnout in the rally came despite the main opposition SJB's decision to stay away. The SJB, led by Sajith Premadasa, is ideologically opposed to the Rajapaksas' SLPP and has sought to avoid joint appearances due to ongoing corruption investigations.

UNP's Harin Fernando claimed the rally was a "roaring success" despite alleged attempts by the government to scuttle it. *—PTI*

Mahinda Rajapaksa *PHOTO: PTI*

- Since sweeping the 2024 elections, the NPP government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, has pursued cases against members of the previous Rajapaksa administration.

Stronger quake may hit B'desh, say experts

DHAKA, 23 NOV

Experts have urged the Bangladesh government to take immediate action after an earthquake claimed at least 10 lives in the country, warning that a far stronger tremor may lie ahead, resulting in greater losses.

A 5.7-magnitude earthquake struck on 21 November, causing deaths and significant damage to buildings, mostly in central parts of Bangladesh. Three mild-intensity tremors also rocked the country on 22 November.

The Dhaka district administration has confirmed damage to at least 14 buildings, while Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) put the figure at over 50. The number was expected to rise.

Munaz Ahmed Noor, vice president of the Bangladesh Earthquake Society, said Rajuk, the agency monitoring compliance from planning to construction, faced a chronic shortage of manpower.

He stressed strict adherence to the Bangladesh National Building Code, noting that errors often occur not in design, but during implementation.

Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology recommended that Rajuk issue public notices urging homeowners to assess their buildings. *—PTI*

Rescue personnel engaged in rescue operations during the aftermath of the massive earthquake in Bangladesh *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

- A 5.7-magnitude earthquake struck, causing deaths and significant damage to buildings, mostly in central parts of Bangladesh. Three mild-intensity tremors also occurred in the country on Saturday.

Thousands protests in Tunisia after crackdown

The protest rally in Tunis brought together families of political detainees, who demanded their release *PHOTO: PTI*

TUNIS, 23 NOV

Tunisians took to the streets of Tunis on Saturday over President Kais Saied's authoritarian rule and demanded the release of all jailed political prisoners.

The rally, held under the banner "Against Injustice," brought together families of political detainees. The Opposition claims that around 700 people were killed during the recent elections and thousands detained.

The demonstration drew around 1,000 protesters, some dressed in black and chanting anti-regime slogans like, "The people want to overthrow the regime," "What a great country! Oppression and tyranny!" and "No fear, no terror, the street belongs to the people."

The protest comes as protests are surging nationwide due to political and economic problems under Saied's rule. Tunisian journalists also protested against the crackdown on press freedom and the temporary suspension of civil society organisations. *—PTI*

TO FIGHT MILITANTS

US has a plan for Nigeria's Christians

WASHINGTON, 23 NOV

President Donald Trump's administration is promoting efforts to work with Nigeria's government to counter violence against Christians, signalling a broader strategy since he ordered preparations for possible military action and warned that the US could go in "guns-a-blazing" to wipe out Islamic militants.

A State Department official said last week that plans involve much more than just the potential use of military force, describing an expansive approach that includes diplomatic tools, such as potential sanctions, but also assistance programs and intelligence sharing with the Nigerian government.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth also met with Nigeria's National Security Adviser to discuss ways to stop the violence. Hegseth said that the Pentagon is "working aggressively with Nigeria to end the persecution of Christians by jihadist terrorists."

The efforts may support Trump's pledge to avoid more involvement in foreign conflicts and come as the US security footprint has diminished in Africa, where military partnerships have either been scaled down or cancelled. American forces likely would have to be drawn from other parts of the world for any military intervention in Nigeria.

The region is also a diplomatic blackhole, with West African countries rejecting Western influence after a series of coups. Junta-led Mali has also been strangled by militant groups cutting-off fuel supplies recently.

"I'm really angry about it," Trump said on Friday when asked about the new violence on the Fox News Radio. He alleged that Nigeria's government has "done nothing" and said "what's happening in Nigeria is a disgrace." *—PTI*

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth meet with Nigeria's National Security Advisor Nuhu Ribadu *PHOTO: X @SECWAR*

COP 30 ends with no resolution on fossil fuels

BELEM, 22 NOV

The UN climate talks in Brazil reached a subdued agreement Saturday, pledging more funding for countries to adapt to extreme weather.

However, the agreement doesn't include details on phasing out fossil fuels or strengthening countries; inadequate emissions-cutting plans, which dozens of nations had demanded.

Brazil said it would eventually come up with a roadmap to give up fossil fuels, working with hard-line Colombia, but it won't have the same force as the deal approved at the United Nations conference 'COP30.'

Colombia responded angrily to the deal after it was approved, citing the absence of wording on fossil fuels.

The deal was crafted after around 12 hours of late-night and early morning meetings in COP30 President André Corrêa do Lago's office.

Do Lago said the discussions started at Belem will continue under Brazil's leadership until the next annual conference, "even if they are not reflected in this text we just approved."

He said that a fossil fuel transition plan will be in another proposal that would be issued later by his team. *—PTI*

Activists at the summit *PHOTO: X*

India, Israel to implement FTA in two phases: Goyal

The nations inked terms of reference to launch negotiations

JERUSALEM, 23 NOV

India and Israel are considering implementing their proposed free trade agreement (FTA) in two phases to ensure early benefits for the trade community of both countries, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

India and Israel on Thursday inked terms of reference (ToR) to formally launch negotiations for the agreement.

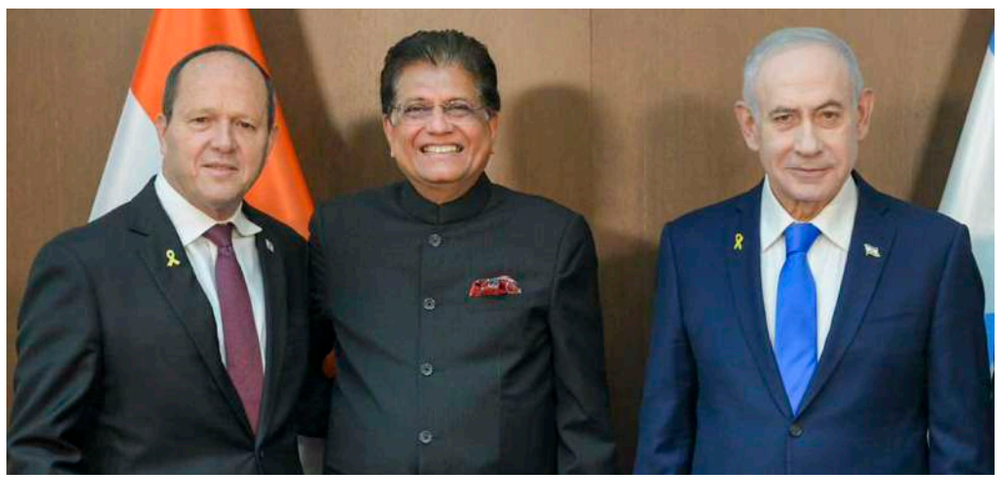
The ToR include market access for goods by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers, investment facilitation, simplification of customs procedures, increasing cooperation for innovation and technology transfer, and easing norms to promote trade in services.

"We are considering doing this in two tranches. A decision will be taken when the talks begin. Both ministers are keen to finalise the first phase early so that the trade community benefits sooner," Goyal said here.

The minister is in Israel to meet leaders and businesses to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and investments. He is leading a 60-member business delegation.

Goyal said that he and Israeli Economy and Industry Minister Nir Barkat have agreed that they will first focus on low-hanging fruit in the FTA.

They have also decided not to touch the sensitive issues on both sides.



Minister of Economy and Industry of Israel Nir Barkat, Union Minister Piyush Goyal with Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

The two countries, he said, may look at "how innovative and R&D can drive greater investments in each other's countries, work on joint projects where we can leverage on their skill sets and they can leverage on the economies of scale in a large market like India".

Additionally, the guidelines for the Rs 25,060-crore Export Promotion Mission (EPM) are likely to be released from next week, detailing its components and benefits for the industry, Goyal said.

The government, on 12 November, approved the EPM with an outlay of Rs 25,060 crore for six financial years, beginning 2025-26, to help exporters deal with high tariffs imposed by the US. *—PTI*

RS 12,450 CR INFUSION

FM revives merger proposal for state's 3 insurance firms

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Finance Ministry has revived a proposal to merge three state-owned general insurance companies—Oriental Insurance, National Insurance, and United India Insurance—into a single entity. This comes in light of their improved financial health and aims to enhance efficiency and scale in operations.

The government previously invested Rs 17,450 crore between 2019-20 and 2021-22 to assist these firms out of financial distress. The merger was initially announced by former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley during the 2018-19 Budget, but the idea was shelved in July 2020. Instead, the Union Cabinet approved a capital infusion of Rs 12,450 crore into the three companies.

Sources indicate that the ministry is conducting a preliminary assessment of the merger, aiming to boost efficiency. Additionally, a proposal to privatise one of the general insurance firms, as part of the government's broader privatisation agenda, is under consideration. Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced significant privatisation plans during the 2021-22 Budget, which included the privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company.

In August 2021, Parliament passed the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Act, allowing for greater private participation and dropping the requirement for the government to hold at least 51 per cent equity in insurers.

The government is also preparing to introduce a bill to increase the foreign direct investment limit in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, up from the current 74 per cent, during the upcoming Winter session of Parliament, which runs from 1 to 19 December. *—PTI*

OYO Assets secures ₹125 cr in fresh funding round

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

OYO's parent company, PRISM-backed OYO Assets, has successfully raised Rs 125 crore in a new funding round led by InCred, alongside various institutional and private investors. Also known as Sunday PropTech, the firm focuses on acquiring and developing hotels in India within the premium and mid-premium sectors. This recent equity infusion will bolster OYO Assets' presence in key leisure and business destinations while enhancing its asset management capabilities. Saurabh Jhalaria, Chief Investment Officer at InCred, stated, "The early performance of the portfolio demonstrates resilience... This capital raise strengthens the platform's ability to acquire high-quality assets at scale." OYO Assets aims to acquire 12 hotels this financial year, with seven already in advanced discussions. *—PTI*

Adani buys Trade Castle Tech Park for ₹231 crore

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

AdaniConneX (ACX), the joint venture between Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) and EdgeConneX, has acquired infrastructure developer Trade Castle Tech Park for Rs 231.34 crore. AEL said in a stock exchange filing that ACX signed a share purchase agreement on 21 November, 2025 with the company's existing shareholders to acquire a 100% stake, with completion expected by the end of November. The acquisition aims to support the development of new infrastructure facilities. Trade Castle Tech Park, incorporated in October 2023, has not yet begun commercial operations but owns a large land parcel and holds key licenses to start infrastructure activities, giving ACX an early advantage. AdaniConneX is building a 1 GW national data center platform, with centers across major Indian cities. *—PTI*

J&K to auction 7 limestone blocks for first time

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

For the first time, seven limestone blocks will be auctioned in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Monday. The mines ministry said this marks the UT's first mining block auction since recent reforms, aimed at boosting transparency, competitiveness and sustainable development in the mineral sector. Covering about 314 hectares across Anantnag, Rajouri and Poonch, the blocks fall under the G3 and G4 exploration stages and hold strong potential for high-quality limestone used in cement and construction. The auction will be launched in Jammu on 24 November, 2025 by Union coal and mines minister G Kishan Reddy, under Section 11 of the MMDR Act. The initiative is expected to generate jobs, increase revenues and support Jammu & Kashmir's economic growth. *—PTI*

Board of Trade to hold a meeting on 25 November

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Board of Trade (BoT), chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, will meet on Tuesday to discuss measures to boost India's exports amid steep US tariffs. Representatives from states, Union territories, and export promotion councils will present their views. The meeting comes as India's exports fell 11.8 per cent in October to USD 34.38 billion, while the trade deficit hit a record USD 41.68 billion, driven by surging gold imports. India's merchandise exports to the US also declined for a second month due to Washington's 50 per cent tariffs. To address global trade pressures, the government has approved a Rs 25,060-crore export promotion mission for 2025–31. India aims to reach USD 2 trillion in exports by 2030. *—PTI*

Aurobindo Pharma faces loss at Chinese plant

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Aurobindo Pharma is currently facing losses at its Chinese plant but aims to achieve break-even by the end of the fiscal year, as revealed by CFO S Subramanian.

Despite these challenges, the Hyderabad-based company remains optimistic about sustaining its growth trajectory and enhancing value across all its operations.

"China (plant), as on date in the quarter, I will be incurring a loss of around maybe a million dollars, but, probably, we will be able to achieve break-even between Q3 and Q4, and after that, China will start contributing to the EBITDA growth," Subramanian stated during an analyst call.

The oral-solid-dosage (OSD) facility is progressing towards its capacity of two billion units, following European approval for ten products and three local approvals.

Highlighting domestic operations, Subramanian reported the production of approximately 1,050MT of Pen-G at 40-50 per cent capacity, with an annualised output projected at around 6,000MT.

He noted, "We have made our representation to the government to implement the minimum import price, which will support achieving 100 per cent capacity utilisation, taking production to 15,000MT in a very short term."

With robust growth in Europe and transitioning operations in the US, the company is confident of achieving its internal margin target of 20-21 per cent for FY26. *—PTI*

UFLEX TO INVEST RS 700 CRORE IN K'TAKA EXPANSION

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

UFlex Ltd, one of India's leading flexible packaging manufacturers, will invest over Rs 700 crore to expand its packaging film production line in Dharwad, Karnataka, according to a senior company official.

The expansion will add 54,000 MTPA of new capacity, increasing UFlex's global packaging film capacity from 636,160 MTPA to 690,160 MTPA. The Dharwad project follows the recent completion of the company's aseptic packaging expansion in Sanand, Gujarat, where capacity was raised from 7 billion to 12 billion packs per year. Bhatia said three other strategic projects are also progressing well: a 12-billion-pack aseptic plant in Egypt, an 80-million WPP bags line in Mexico, and a 40,000 MTPA recycling facility in Noida. These will begin contributing from FY27 and reach full impact in FY28.

He added that the expansions are expected to generate nearly Rs 3,000 crore in additional revenue, supported by GST rationalisation and rising demand for recycled packaging under India's EPR framework. *—PTI*

VOLATILITY LIKELY TO RISE

Macro data, global trends to drive mkts this week: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Macroeconomic indicators, global market trends, and foreign investor activity are expected to shape market sentiment this week, according to analysts.

Volatility is likely to rise ahead of the November derivatives expiry. Domestically, markets will focus on several major data releases, including the second-quarter GDP figures and industrial production numbers. Globally, investors will monitor movements in US markets along with key economic updates that are expected to influence risk appetite and foreign fund flows, said Ajit Mishra, SVP – Research at Religare Broking.

Last week, the BSE Sensex gained 669.14 points, or 0.79 per cent, while the NSE Nifty advanced 158.1 points, or 0.61 per cent. On 20 November, the Sensex surged to a 52-week high of 85,801.70, and the Nifty touched its 52-week peak of 26,246.65. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, noted that the market may see bouts of profit-booking if pressure on the rupee continues. Investors will also track trade developments and key economic releases such as IIP and Q2 FY26 GDP data for clearer direction. The movement of Brent crude and the rupee-dollar equation will also remain important factors for market participants.

Overall, markets are expected to stay firm, supported by buying on dips, improving demand prospects in the third quarter, and steady fund flows. Any progress in India-US trade negotiations could act as a short-term catalyst, said Siddhartha Khemka of Motilal Oswal.

Puneet Singhania of Master Trust Group added that domestic resilience and near record-high indices may lend the markets a mildly positive bias this week. *—PTI*

Mcap of top 7 firms surges Rs 1.28L crore

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The combined market valuation of seven of India's ten most valued companies rose by Rs 1,28,281.52 crore last week, supported by a positive trend in equities. The BSE benchmark advanced 669.14 points, or 0.79 per cent, over the week.Reliance Industries and Bharti Airtel recorded the strongest gains. Reliance's market capitalisation increased by Rs 36,673 crore to Rs 20,92,052.61 crore, while Bharti Airtel added Rs 36,579.01 crore, taking its value to Rs 12,33,279.85 crore. Infosys, TCS, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India and Hindustan Unilever also posted notable increases in their valuations. *—PTI*

Sebi unveils new thresholds for material RPTs

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Markets regulator Sebi has introduced a new turnover-based framework to determine the materiality of related party transactions (RPTs) for listed companies. The changes aim to address industry concerns, remove ambiguities, and ensure a more balanced approach between investor protection and ease of doing business under the Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) norms.

Under the revised rules, the materiality of an RPT will now be linked to the annual consolidated turnover of the listed entity. For companies with turnover up to Rs 20,000 crore, a transaction will be considered material if it exceeds 10 per cent of annual consolidated turnover. For companies with turnover between Rs 20,001 crore and Rs 40,000 crore, the threshold will be Rs 2,000 crore plus 5 per cent of the turnover beyond Rs 20,000 crore. For entities with turnover above Rs 40,000 crore, the threshold will be Rs 3,000 crore plus 2.5 per cent of the turnover exceeding Rs 40,000 crore, or Rs 5,000 crore, whichever is lower.

Sebi has introduced an absolute upper ceiling of Rs 5,000 crore for high-turnover companies to protect minority shareholders.

Previously, a listed entity had to classify an RPT as material if it crossed Rs 1,000 crore or 10 per cent of annual consolidated turnover, whichever was lower. Stakeholders had argued that this fixed threshold created a "one-size-fits-all" approach, unfairly equating companies of vastly different scales.

Sebi has also simplified disclosure and approval requirements.

If the total value of RPTs with a related party in a financial year, including ratified transactions, does not exceed 1 per cent of turnover or Rs 10 crore, whichever is lower, companies may provide a simplified set of disclosures to the audit committee and shareholders.

This will reduce compliance burden for smaller or routine transactions. *—ANI*

Agentic AI adoption surges across India's GCCs: Report

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

India's Global Capacity Centers (GCCs) have moved decisively from AI experimentation to large-scale enterprise adoption, according to the EY India GCC Pulse Survey 2025.

The report shows that 58 per cent of centers are currently investing in Agentic AI, while another 29 per cent plan to scale these capabilities within the next year. GenAI is being applied where it delivers the greatest impact chiefly in customer service (65 per cent), followed by finance (53 per cent), operations (49 per cent) and IT and cyber security (45 per cent).

Business intelligence adoption has risen to 86 per cent, and data strategy implementation has increased to 67 per cent. Notably, two-thirds of GCCs have set up dedicated innovation teams and incubation programmers to generate and globalise ideas from India.

The survey highlights India's growing role in global decision-making, with 52 per cent of centers sharing accountability and 20 per cent moving towards full ownership of select functions. Over the next year, GCCs will priorities digital transformation (61 per cent), cost reduction (54 per cent) and expanding functional scope (51 per cent). Budgets are being directed mainly towards technology and transformation and talent development. *—ANI*

7.3MT straw yields ₹270 cr renewable energy: IBA

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

The Indian Biogas Association (IBA) revealed that utilising 7.3 million tonnes of paddy straw, currently burnt by farmers, in biogas plants could generate renewable energy valued at approximately Rs 270 crore per year. It stated that advanced anaerobic digestion processes can efficiently convert this agricultural residue into Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG), serving as a replacement for imported natural gas.

Beyond energy generation, paddy straw, comprising 40 per cent cellulose, is a promising source for bioethanol production, potentially achieving import substitutions valued at Rs 1,600 crore. Even the remaining 20 per cent lignin content can produce high-value products like polymers and activated carbon.

"This policy is likely to attract investments of Rs 37,500 crore and facilitate the establishment of 750 CBG projects in the country by 2028-29," noted IBA Chairman Gaurav Kedia. He underscored that this initiative represents a shift towards energy security sourced from domestic resources rather than imports. *—PTI*

'ENSURING SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE'

magicpin, Rapido partner to challenge Zomato-Swiggy

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

magicpin and Rapido have joined hands to take on the duopoly of Zomato and Swiggy, whereby the country's third largest food delivery player will plug its nationwide restaurant network to Rapido-owned platform Ownly, people aware of the development said.

The partnership will open up magicpin's large restaurant base for Rapido, which launched Ownly in August, and has been looking to scale beyond Bengaluru. Once the onboarding process is complete, Rapido's Ownly will have access to over 80,000 restaurants across the country, whereas magicpin will gain access to Rapido's delivery fleet in certain locations.

"Rapido primarily on-boards restaurants directly through our merchant team, with only a very small share coming via partners like magicpin. We also work with magicpin and others in select cities as a logistics provider, where our captain fleet supports last-mile deliveries. "Our focus remains on building reliable, affordable, full-stack discovery and delivery solutions for merchants, while ensuring a seamless experience for customers and captains," a Rapido spokesperson told PTI in response to email queries on the partnership.

magicpin did not respond to an email seeking responses for the story.

Despite the promise of disruption, the magicpin-Rapido alliance faces a steep climb.

Food delivery remains a tough, low-margin business, where balancing rider payouts, delivery costs, and customer discounts can make or break viability.

At the same time, the duo must focus on stronger relationships with brands and restaurants, many of whom already struggle with multiple delivery platforms. *—PTI*

Syed Modi India Int'l Super 300 meet in Lucknow

LUCKNOW, 23 NOV

Former champion Kidambi Srikanth, Olympians Nozomi Okuhara and HS Prannoy, along with a strong international field, will headline the Syed Modi India International HSBC World Tour Super 300 Badminton Championship beginning here on Tuesday. Defending women's doubles champions Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will also return to this meet. The field also includes emerging talents like Priyanshu Rajawat, Tanvi Sharma, Anmol Kharb and Unnati Hooda, with India fielding the largest contingent of 152 players. The Uttar Pradesh Badminton Association president, Dr Navneet Sehgal, on Sunday announced that a total prize purse of USD 240,000 will be on offer.

PHOTO: PTI

East Bengal bow out of AFC Women's Champions League

WUHAN, 23 NOV

East Bengal were on Sunday eliminated from the AFC Women's Champions League group stage after suffering a 0-3 thrashing at the hands of PFC Nasaf of Uzbekistan here.Diyorakhon Khabibullaeva (18th and 90+8) struck a brace while Zarina Norboeva found the target in the 52nd minute. East Bengal ended their debut campaign with three points, which will not be enough for them to advance as one of the two best third-placed teams.The Moshal Girls had earlier defeated Bam Khatoon FC of Iran 3-1 and lost 0-2 to Wuhan Jiangda FC of China in Group B.The win moved the Uzbekistan side to four points, guaranteeing them a spot in the quarter-finals as one of the best third-placed finishers.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Abhinav wins 25m pistol gold at Deaflympics

TOKYO, 23 NOV

Abhinav Deshwal won India's 15th medal in shooting at the Deaflympics, clinching the gold in the 25m pistol event here on Sunday with a record in qualification. He shot a score of 44 in the final to edge out South Korea's Seung Hwa Lee, who finished on a score of 43. Serhii Formin of Ukraine won the bronze while the other Indian shooter, Chetan Hanmant Sapkal, finished in fifth place. Abhinav started the final with five perfect hits, following it up with another four hits in the second series. He hit the next 18 of 20 shots, which included two series of perfect fives and two rounds of four hits.—*PTI*

Devanda wins Asia Oceania 100km Ultra C'ship

NEW DELHI, 23 NOV

Amar Singh Devanda clocked a national record time of 6:59:37 to win the Asia Oceania 100km Ultra Championship held in Bangkok.Amar is a part of the 11-member contingent competing in the event organised by the International Association of Ultrarunners."Amar Singh Devanda creates history for India, winning the Asia Oceania 100 km Ultra Championship in a National Record time of 6:59:37," AFI said in a post on X on Sunday.The other members of the Indian squad include Saurav Kumar Ranjan, Geeno Antony, Velu Perumal, Yogesh Sanap, Jayadrath, Aarti Zanwar, Ranji Singh, Sindhu Umesh, Namgyal Lhamo, and Tenzin Dolma. —*PTI*

India trail SA by 480 runs; Muthusamy, Jansen shine

Trailing 0-1 in the two-match series, India were nine for no loss

GUWAHATI, 23 NOV

South Africa's Senuran Muthusamy, with Marco Janse, celebrates his century during day two of the second Test cricket match *PHOTO: PTI*

Senuran Muthusamy and Marco Jansen made Indian finger spinners look ordinary in good batting conditions with invaluable lower-order contributions as South Africa seized control of the second Test by posting a massive 489 in their first innings here on Sunday.

Trailing 0-1 in the two-match series, India were nine for no loss in 6.1 overs when stumps were drawn in fading light. Muthusamy, who had scored a match-winning 89 not out against Pakistan in Rawalpindi a month ago, hit his maiden Test hundred, a gutsy 109 off 206 balls, while Jansen sent the spinners on a proverbial leather hunt with a smashing 91-ball-93.

The last four Proteas batters from Nos 7 to 11 added a whopping 243 runs. Muthusamy and Verreynne added 88 for the seventh wicket while the centurion added another 97 runs with number nine Jansen.

During his belligerent effort, Jansen smashed seven sixes, the highest by an overseas batter on Indian soil, surpassing Viv Richards and Matthew Hayden, both of whom had hit half a dozen maximums.The South African innings lasted for 151.1 overs, and the plight of the Indian bowlers could be gauged by the fact that this was also the first time that all five specialist bowlers had to bowl 25 or more overs in a single innings.

India 9 for 0 (Jaiswal 7*, Rahul 2*) trail South Africa 489 (Muthusamy 109, Jansen 93, Kuldeep 4-115) by 480 runs

KL Rahul to lead India in ODI series against SA

Senior batter KL Rahul was on Sunday named as India's captain for the upcoming three-match ODI series against South Africa.

Rahul was handed the reins of the team after regular skipper Shubman Gill was ruled out of the series with a neck injury that he sustained during the first Test against South Africa in Kolkata.

Wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant is the deputy of Rahul for the series, which begins on November 30 in Ranchi, followed by matches in Raipur (December 3) and Visakhapatnam (December 6).

India's ODI squad: Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Tilak Varma, KL Rahul (C) (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Prasidh, Arshdeep, Dhruv Jurel. —*PTI*

MAIDEN TOURNAMENT

India win T20 Blind Women's Cricket WC

COLOMBO, 23 NOV

India on Sunday won the inaugural Blind Women's T20 World Cup after defeating Nepal by seven wickets in the final played at the P Sara Oval in Colombo.

India restricted Nepal to 114 for five after opting to bowl and then coasted to 117 for three in just 12 overs to win the crown. Phula Saren top-scored for India in the run chase with 44 not out.

Such was India's domination that its rival managed just a single boundary in its innings.

India had beaten Australia in the first semifinal on Saturday, while Nepal had won against Pakistan.

Co-host Sri Lanka could win only one game against the USA out of the five preliminary round games.

Pakistan's Mehreen Ali, a B3 or partially sighted player, was the star batter in the six-team tournament, scoring over 600 runs, including a 78-ball 230 against Sri Lanka. She also scored 133 against Australia. —*PTI*

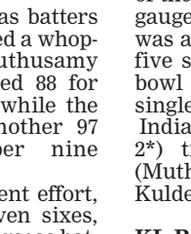
Indian women players celebrate after their team's victory in the first Blind Women's Twenty20 World Cup 2025 final match against Nepal in Colombo on 23 November *PHOTO: PTI*

Lakshya Sen and Yushi Tanaka's tense battle

SYDNEY, 23 NOV

Lakshya Sen defeated Japan's Yushi Tanaka in the Australian Open men's singles final here on Sunday and clinched his first title of the 2025 season.

Lakshya made a confident start, opening up a 6-3 lead as Tanaka committed a flurry of errors.



A 35-shot rally ended with the Japanese again finding the net, before a lucky net cord finally broke Lakshya's run of points.

Two crisp smashes on either flank had Lakshya on the floor as Tanaka closed the gap to 7-9, but the Indian carried a three-point cushion into the mid-game interval after the Japanese sent another shot to the net.

The Indian tightened his grip, dominating the net exchanges and keeping the shuttle flat and deep, denying Tanaka the length he needed to unleash his whipping smashes as he moved ahead 13-9.

Tanaka responded with a powerful smash, followed by a long error from Lakshya and a sharp net shot to make it 12-13. But Lakshya opened up a four-point lead at 17-13 with a backhand smash and another fierce cross-court winner.

Tanaka tried to stay in the game, but two long errors handed Lakshya five game points. The Indian converted immediately as Tanaka

2ND ASHES TEST

Head's hundred, Cummins' possible return could shake up Australia's lineup

PERTH, 23 NOV

Changing a winning combination in the second Ashes cricket test could be on the cards for Australia after Travis Head's astonishing audition as an opener and the possible return of regular skipper Pat Cummins.

Changing the England approach after succumbing to an eight-wicket loss inside two days at a speed unseen in a century is unlikely, according to head coach Brendon McCullum. He is steadfastly sticking with his "blueprint" despite mounting criticism of the attack-at-all costs Bazball method from critics, including former test skippers.

Wrapping up the first test in Perth so quickly gave the players from both teams an extra three days to recover and prepare for the day-night test at the Gabba starting Dec. 4.

Head volunteered to move up the batting order from No. 5 to open when Usman Khawaja was injured ahead of Australia's second innings, when the first test was delicately poised after a clattering of 30 wickets in five sessions.

Far from being overawed, he clubbed a century off 69 deliveries, the third-fastest ever by an Australian in test cricket and ended up with 123, more than double the next-highest individual score in Perth.

How the 38-year-old Khawaja recovers from a back problem will determine the Australian top order in Brisbane, his home ground, as much as his batting form and age.

The bowling attack may also be overhauled with Cummins saying he's "half a chance" to be fit in time after missing the Perth test. —*PTI*

Smriti Mandhana's wedding postponed

SANGLI, 23 NOV

The wedding of star Indian women's cricketer Smriti Mandhana and music composer Palash Munchal has been postponed indefinitely after her father Shrinivas fell ill in the lead-up to the ceremony, which was scheduled to take place here on Sunday.

Mandhana is emotionally attached to her father, who has been a constant source of support in her cricketing journey.

Tuhin Mishra, the manager of Mandhana, said the World Cup-winning cricketer's father suffered a health complication early on Sunday morning. "Smriti's father, Mr. Shrinivas Mandhana, was having breakfast this morning, and his health started deteriorating. We waited, thinking he would recover soon, but it didn't improve. —*PTI*

Rahim's century leads Bangladesh to a series sweep

DHAKA, 23 NOV

Mushfiqur Rahim marked his 100th Test by scoring a century as Bangladesh completed a 217-run win in the second Test to seal a 2–0 series sweep over Ireland on Sunday.

Mushfiqur hit 106 and added an unbeaten 53 in the second innings for a match total of 159, while Liton Das struck 128 as the hosts posted 476 in their first innings.

Irish off-spinner Andy McBrine took 6-109 to stall Bangladesh's push past 500, but Taijul Islam dominated the match with figures of 4-76 and 4-94, becoming the first Bangladeshi bowler to reach 250 Test wickets as Ireland was dismissed for 265 in its first innings. Bangladesh, however, opted not to enforce the follow-on and openers Shadman Islam (78) and Mahmudul Hasan Joy (60) combined for a 119-run partnership. Ireland pair Harry Tector (50) and Curtis Campher dug in to take the game into the fifth day.

Bangladesh 476 (Litton 128, Mushfiqur 106) and 297 for 4 dec (Mominul 87, Shadman 78) beat Ireland 265 (Tucker 75*, Taijul 4-76) and 291 (Campher 71*, Tector 50, Murad 4-44, Taijul 4-104) by 217 runs —*PTI*

CHESS WORLD CUP: SINDAROV PROGRESSES IN UZBEK BATTLE

NAGPUR, 23 NOV

A cool breeze blew across Rio Resort, bringing relief to an oppressively warm Sunday evening. That comforting breeze must have done little to calm Andrey Esipenko as he came out of the playing hall and walked swiftly towards his room.

Even the conditioned air inside the room may not have helped. The 23-year-old Russian had just blundered a place in the Chess World Cup final, and with that, also a confirmed ticket for the flight to Cyprus, which will host the Candidates in March-April next year. Esipenko can still make it to the Candidates by winning the playoff for third place at the World Cup. He may yet do it, but his 56th move in the second tie-break game of the semifinal against Wei Yi will haunt him for a

long time. It was a gentle pawn push on the 'c' file to the sixth rank, but it was also an irretrievable step to self-destruction. In the final, starting on Monday, the seventh-seeded Wei will meet Javokhir Sindarov. In the all-Uzbek semifinal, the 16th seed scored a crucial win against Nodirbek Yakubboev in the first game, riding on his advanced passed pawn.

Sindarov then only needed a draw in the second game and got that. In the other match, Esipenko and Wei had drawn the first game, setting up the dramatic second. —*PTI*

James scores record 55 in win over Hornets

NEW YORK, 23 NOV

James Harden went on an early scoring tear and scored a franchise-record 55 points as the Los Angeles Clippers snapped a three-game losing streak by defeating the Charlotte Hornets 131-116 on Saturday night.

Harden made 10 of 16 shots from 3-point range and was 17 of 26 overall from the field, while going 11 of 14 on free throws. The 36-year-old made 12 of 17 shots from the field in the first half while ringing up 35 points, then drained a 3-pointer in the opening minute of the third quarter. His first-half total marked the most for any NBA player this season.The Clippers led 62-57 at the break, boosted by 53.5 per cent shooting from the field.

Harden had 10 of the Clippers' first 18 points and 27 of the team's 38 first-quarter points. Ivica Zubac added 18 points with nine rebounds, Brook Lopez had 11 points off the bench, and John Collins finished with 10 points. Kon Knueppel scored 26 points for the Hornets, who are on a season-worst five-game losing streak. Charlotte had Brandon Miller on the court for the first time since 22 Oct. and he provided 21 points in a starting role. —*PTI*

NARROWS F1 POINTS GAP

Max Verstappen wins Las Vegas GP

LAS VEGAS, 23 NOV

For a driver who hated the Las Vegas Grand Prix before he'd ever turned a lap, Max Verstappen sure has turned the event into his own personal jackpot.

Verstappen won for the second time in four races, and the four-time reigning Formula 1 champion continued to claw his way back into the title picture with a Saturday night victory on the streets of Las Vegas.

It is the second time in three years the Dutchman has won on the course that utilizes a part of the famed Strip. He won the inaugural race in 2023 and clinched his fourth consecutive title here last year. Now he has another win at an event he despised ahead of its debut because of the bright spotlight promoters placed on celebrities and parties instead of the actual competition. But when it comes time to get in the car, no matter how Verstappen feels about the event, he seems to excel.

"Some people like more show added, some people like different kinds of tracks, I think it's about what I like," Verstappen said. "I personally, of course, am less of a showman and not really into that. But I guess in terms of the calendar, if you are in Vegas, it needs to be like this, and that's fine."

Verstappen rushed into the arms of his waiting Red Bull crew as the skyline was illuminated by a spectacular New Year's Eve-style fireworks display.

Verstappen also took a victory lap in a pink Cadillac made of Legos, driven by actor Terry Crews, who is an ambassador for the Cadillac F1 team that will debut next year. —*PTI*

Hockey India announces free tickets for men's junior WC

MADURAI, 23 NOV

Hockey India on Sunday announced free tickets for fans to watch the men's junior World Cup, to be held here from November 28 to December 10.

The tournament, which will also be held in Chennai, will feature a total of 24 teams, making it the largest edition in the junior World Cup history.

"By offering free tickets, we aim to open the gates for students, young athletes, families, and hockey lovers across Tamil Nadu and beyond," said HI president Dilip Tirkey in a release.

The virtual free tickets can be booked through the Ticketgenie website or the Hockey India app, the release said.

"The atmosphere created by passionate fans has always been our biggest strength, and we are committed to making international hockey accessible to everyone," he added. —*PTI*